

# CHINA

C H I N A T O U R I S M



SPRING FESTIVAL CELEBRATIONS  
**A TOUR IN SOUTHERN XINJIANG  
ALONG THE SILK ROAD**

249

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# JIN JIANG HOTEL

*where Shanghai past and future are ever present.*



At the heart of Shanghai, sits the stately Jin Jiang Hotel. Here, venerable European buildings surround a lush, wooded garden, and house some of the most modern facilities available in Shanghai. The hotel is proud to have received about 300 state leaders and government heads since its opening. Its incomparably attentive service has won high praise from guests from both home and abroad. The Cathay Building of Jin Jiang Hotel which was built in 1929, integrates the traditional

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Jin Jiang Grand Hall witnessed numerous historic events including the signing of the "Sino-American Joint Communiqué" in Feb. 1972. After rebuilding, the new Jin Jiang Grand Hall is ready to provide simply the best service and hospitality with the state-of-the-art facilities.

Jin Jiang's food has a history dating back to the 1930's and its Sichuan and Cantonese cuisine has become perfected after more than a half-century of experience.

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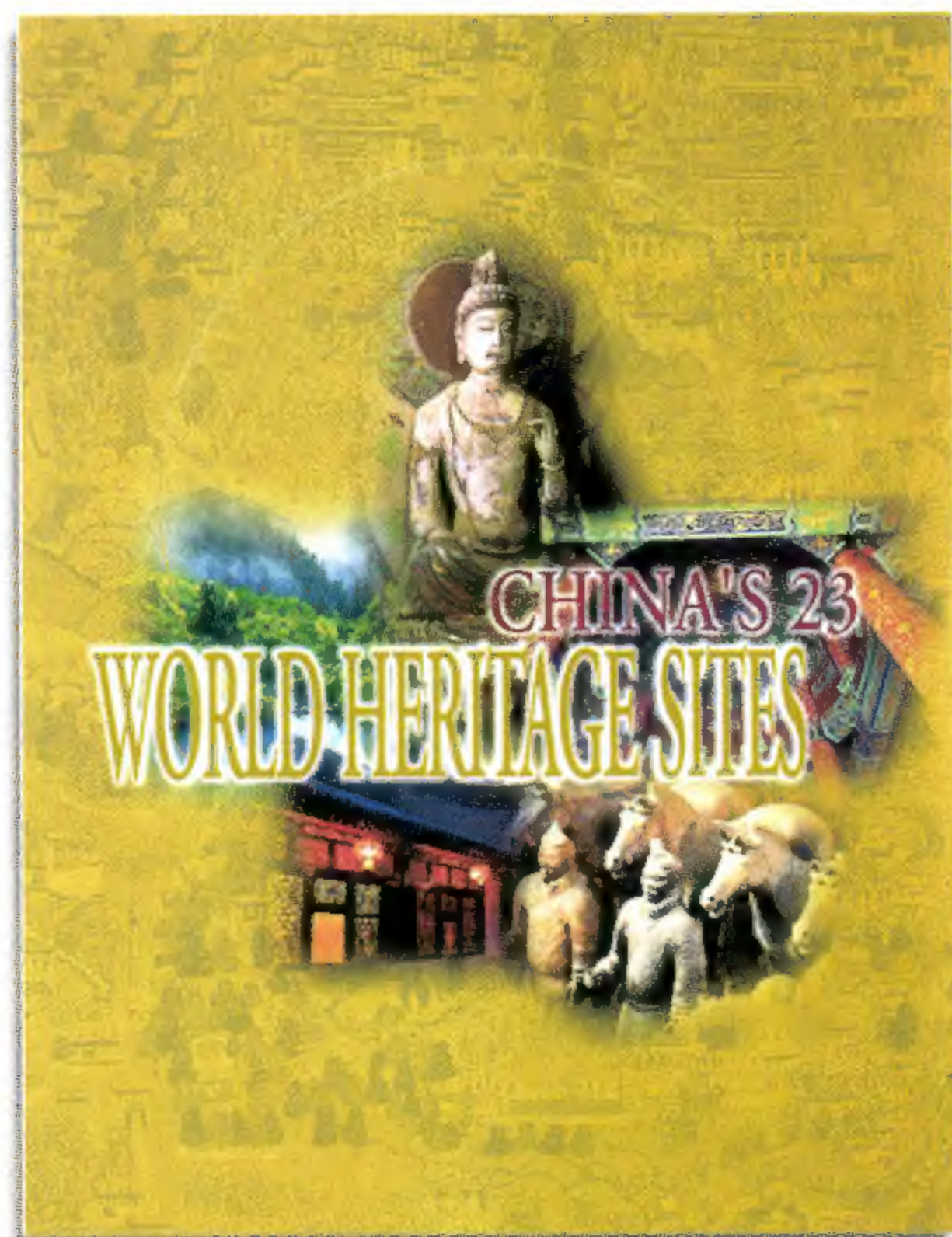
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HOT OFF THE PRESS

# China's 23 World Heritage Sites



Today, more than 580 cultural and natural sites have been placed on UNESCO's World Heritage list. China, one of the world's four ancient civilisations, also has its share of these heritage sites. Up to 1999, 23 sites in the country have been honourably put on the list. These include the Mountain Resort in Chengde, the Temple of Heaven, the Ruins of Zhoukoudian, the Great Wall, the Forbidden City, the Summer Palace, the ancient city of Pingyao, Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang, Qin Shihuang's Mausoleum in Xi'an, Wulingyuan, Huanglong, Jiuzhaigou, Mount Emei, the ancient town of Lijiang, Potala Palace, Mount Wudang, Mount Taishan, Confucius' Temple,

Mansion and Cemetery in Qufu, Suzhou Gardens, Mount Huangshan, Mount Lushan, Mount Wuyi and Dazu Rock Carvings.

In this book, *China's 23 World Heritage Sites*, you can delight in the beauty of each one of these sites. Incredibly gorgeous pictures together with a practical travel guide add to the book's comprehensive nature and make it a great gift for you and your friends.

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China's 23 World Heritage Sites



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*Photos & article by Xie Guanghui*

The vast land of Xinjiang has long been an attractive destination for tourists. But the region is simply too big and with too many scenic spots and cultural relics to see in one trip. This time, our reporter takes you to the southern part of Xinjiang — the area lying south of the Tianshan Mountains — to visit Kuqa, Kashi, Hotan and Minfeng. You will see the colourful lifestyle of the Uygurs, a series of historical and cultural sites, such as the Kizil Thousand-Buddha Caves and the Id Kah Mosque, villages and bazaars, as well as the myriad landscapes of the Tianshan Mountains, the Karakorum Mountains and the Taklimakan Desert.

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*Photos & article by Yu Qiong*

Composed of several small islands in the East China Sea, Shengsi is not well known to most travellers. Yet this author's description may persuade you to go for a visit — to see the old lighthouse carrying the memory of history, the island market where both traders and shoppers are all women, and the golden beaches brought to life by women mending the fishing nets, children playing and dogs barking.

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*Photos & article by Yang Xingfang*

This mountain owes its fame in China to a fable, which tells of the Old Foolish Man who decides to move the mountain out of his way by means of continuous hard work. Whether or not the story is true, Wangwu Mountain draped in the fresh snow of early spring is indeed a thrilling sight.





*On this page we include letters and comments from our readers. We always welcome and value your suggestions, praise, criticism and questions. Please post, fax or E-mail your letters and comments to us (details at the bottom of the page).*

## LETTERS

We have been enjoying your magazine for several years now. This month we travelled in the Heilongjiang Province to see some of the beautiful scenery you describe in Issue No. 246. But we encountered some problems:

1. The forest trains you describe no longer exist.... The last train in Taipinggou to reach the Shuangfeng Linchang was in 1987 and the railways were discontinued in 1994...
2. You describe a nice place to stay for the night in Huilongwan, but this place is closed in winter.
3. You misspelled the name Changting (which you wrote as Changding), so nobody recognised it and we encountered difficulties booking our train as a result.... The correct train from Mudanjiang to Changting is No. 57032 and not No. 834.

Andre Dubreuil, Qingdao

### Editor's reply:

Thank you for your long letter and useful tips on travel in Heilongjiang Province.

We were very sorry to learn that you had received incorrect information for your trip, which must have created considerable inconvenience for you. Since we take seriously any readers' comments on inaccurate information, we checked the article carefully and are now wondering whether you have confused our travel tips with other information you may have received. For example, we did in fact spell Changting correctly and we suggested a bus rather than a train from Taipinggou to Shuangfeng (p.40, "Tips"). We can find no mention in our article of Train No. 834. We do apologise for the problem you encountered over accommodation and will endeavour to check seasonal availability more carefully in the future. We hope our readers go to "Tips for the Traveller" following our major stories for references, but still, they need to check with the travel service organisations we list so as to get the most up-to-date information.

Your magazine is by far the best of its kind that I'm privileged to see. I loan my copies out, and here is one reply I received when this specially merited, and busy, expert returned a copy: "Thanks for the magazine.... I enjoyed it a lot and made photocopies of some pages."(!)

Betty Chandler, Beijing

### Editor's reply:

Thank you for writing to us and for showing our magazine to your friends. Don't forget to let them know there is a subscription form towards the back of the magazine should they be interested in obtaining their own copy — and photocopies of the form are of course perfectly acceptable!

I have recently been introduced to your magazine, and found your article on rammed earth dwellings especially fascinating (Issue No. 247). However, I would have appreciated more information on the method used in the actual building process. Although the article touched on the construction process, it wasn't enough to satisfy my curiosity. The photographs are great. Some of them would benefit from being presented in a larger format, since they are too small to achieve the impact their excellence warrants.

Alex Purves, New Zealand

### Editor's reply:

Thanks very much for your comments, Alex. With regard to the "rammed earth" story, as a travel magazine we are limited to a certain extent on how much technical information we can include in our stories. However, we are delighted to have aroused your interest in these unique buildings. We'll pass on your comments referring to photo formats to our art department.

Please send your letters to:

Hong Kong China Tourism Press, English Editorial Department, 24/F, Westlands Centre, 20 Westlands Road, Quarry Bay, Hong Kong. Fax: (852) 2561 8057, 2561 8196 E-mail: edit-e@hkctp.com.hk



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## Macao: 37.9 Percent Surge in Tourists

According to the latest statistics, 885,700 tourists visited the Macao Special Administrative Region last year, an increase of 37.9 percent compared with the previous year. The majority of Macao's visitors are Chinese. Tourists from Hong Kong, the Chinese mainland and Taiwan accounted for 57, 26 and 11.1 percent respectively. The Spring Festival, the most important festive occasion for the Chinese, played an important role in the increase.

## Shanghai Lists Relics from Early 20th Century

The Shanghai Historical Museum recently took three new relics into its collection: the city's first fire hydrant; two bottles of drinking water, and an inscription board. The fire hydrant was made in 1883 and installed by a British firm in the then British concession in Shanghai. The two 80-year-old water bottles were made by Aquarius, a British company, which later merged with Shanghai Maling to form Shanghai Maling Aquarius, which is still in business. The wooden board, 3.66 metres long, is inscribed with the motto of the Shanghai Xiandai Vocational and Technical School. It was a gift from the school's alumni association in 1921.



## New Toilets for Tourists, Guangzhou

The Guangzhou municipal government has decided to build 15 new public toilet facilities before June in order to meet the demand created by an increasing number of tourists. The new toilets will be distributed throughout the city's traditional business and tourist districts, including Dongshan, Huangpu, Yuexiu and Liwan. In 2000, the government invested 15 million yuan (US\$1.81 million) in the improvement of toilet facilities. As a result, 16 new public toilets have been built and 77 old ones renovated.

## 2,000-Year-Old Musical Instruments Unearthed in Shandong

In a Han-dynasty tomb located in Luozhuang Village in the suburbs of the capital city Jinan of Shandong Province, archeologists discovered 140 musical instruments buried in the tomb's "concert pit". Among these are 19 chime bells considered to have high archeological value. The largest musical instrument found is called "Chuanyu". The tattoo carved on its lower right corner is typical of the Han-dynasty style. The smallest instrument, the "Duo", measures only a few centimetres. It produces clear single sounds when gently shaken. Another small piece, "Zheng", is for holding in the hand and striking with a tiny drumstick.

The unearthing of the Luozhuang Han Tomb began in June 2000. In Tomb No. 5, dedicated to the burial of sacrificed human beings, 105 daily utility items were found, 99 of them bronzes. On some of them can be seen the carved characters "Great Official of Qi", indicating that the tomb owner was the court official of the State of Qi, who was in charge of the daily life of the royal family.



## THE ROAD WELL TRAVELLED

The Silk Road in effect consisted of many routes rather than a single road, and supported trade in not just silk but a variety of goods. Since ancient times, this vast trading network has carried an aura of mystique, not only for the celebrated characters from history that haunt its path, but also for the sheer diversity of its landscape and inhabitants.

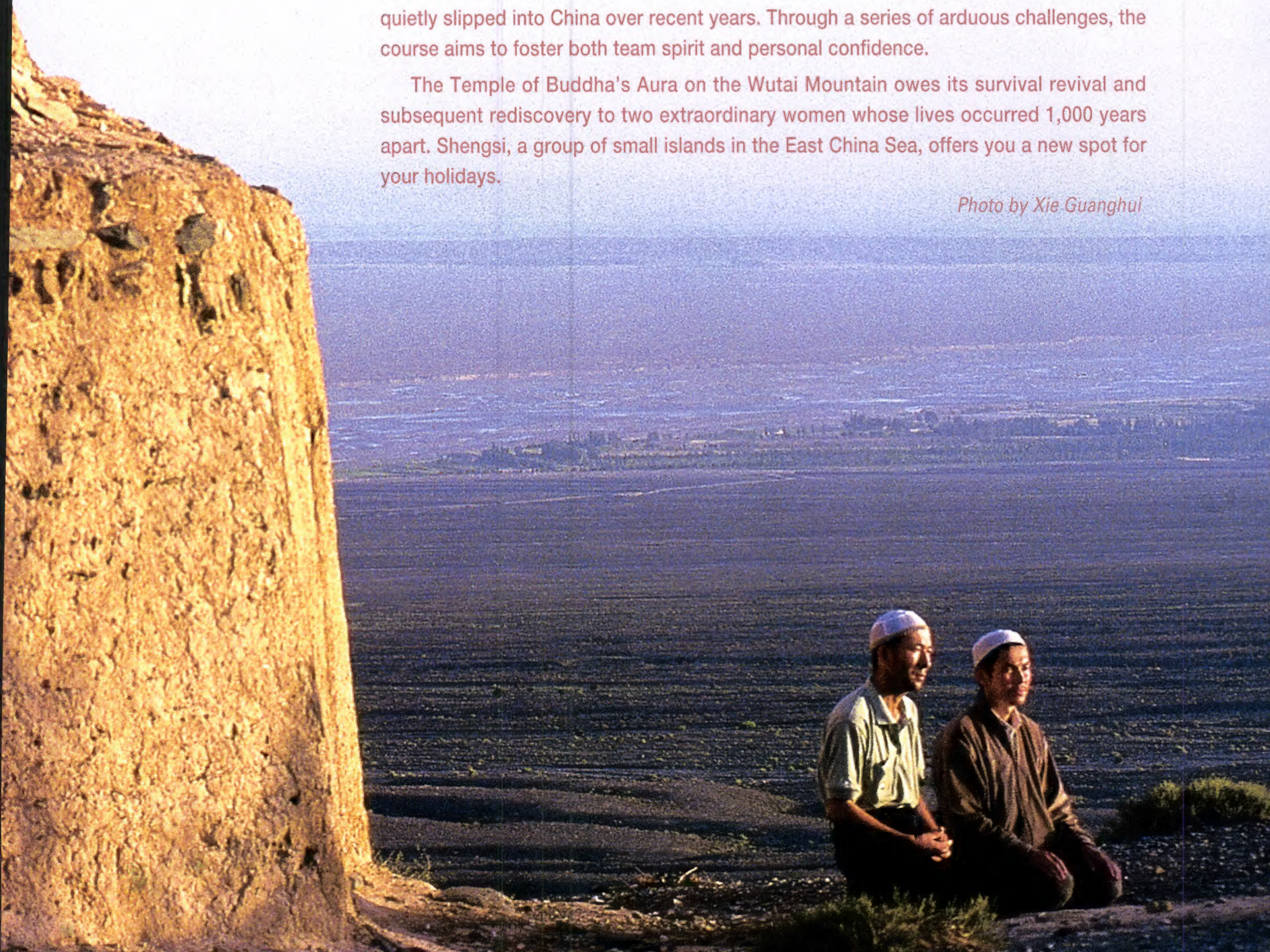
From Xinjiang, the Silk Road branches out in three directions: the northern, central and southern. This time last year (Issue 237), we featured a journey to the Tianshan Mountains on the northern Xinjiang route. In the current issue, our feature completes the picture by taking you on a round trip of the southern Xinjiang via the central and southern routes. Along the way, you are introduced to Kuqa's unique Qiuci music and dance, Kashi's world-famous Id Kah Mosque, and an infamous highway that runs through the Taklimakan Desert, the second largest desert in the world.

As life settles once more into its daily routine following the joyous upheaval of the Spring Festival, we take a peek at some of the unique ways in which history and legend have contributed to the celebration of this most significant of Han Chinese festivals within individual communities. The wide range of activities is astonishing.

In "Challenges", an inquisitive photographer went along to Qinhuangdao in Hebei Province to find out more about Outward Bound, a rigorous training course that has quietly slipped into China over recent years. Through a series of arduous challenges, the course aims to foster both team spirit and personal confidence.

The Temple of Buddha's Aura on the Wutai Mountain owes its survival revival and subsequent rediscovery to two extraordinary women whose lives occurred 1,000 years apart. Shengsi, a group of small islands in the East China Sea, offers you a new spot for your holidays.

*Photo by Xie Guanghui*





## New Spots

### Baoding Garden Opens in Zhaoqing

#### Guangdong

Dinghu (Tripod Lake) Mountain in Guangdong is a noted scenic resort. The newly opened Baoding Garden is its latest attraction. The 1.23-square-kilometre Baoding Garden was opened to the public on December 23, 2000. Inside the garden are two items recorded in the *Guinness Book of Records*: the Zhaoqing Jiulong (Nine Dragon) Tripod and the Duanxi Dragon King Inkstone.

Dinghu Mountain is famous for its luxuriant ancient trees and waterfalls. There is a lake on the mountain top that never dries up throughout the year. Legend has it that Huangdi (Yellow Emperor) once rode on a dragon to the sky from here.

The largest of its kind in the world, the bronze Jiulong Tripod stands at a height of 6.68 metres, a width of 5.58 metres, and weighs 16 tons. Nine lively dragons are cast



on its outer surface. The giant inkstone stands as a screen wall at the entrance of the garden; on each side of it is a row of bronze statutes depicting dancing figures welcoming the visitors.

## New Spot

### Night Zoo Opens in Panyu, Guangzhou

#### Guangdong

Changlong Night Wildlife World, China's first night zoo, was officially opened to the public on December 28, 2000 in Panyu, Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong Province. Since 90 percent of the animals have a habit of hunting for their food in open areas by night, the zoo has devised three programmes for visitors to enjoy by mini-train or on foot, and staging grand shows in the zoo theatre.

#### Adventure by Mini-train

Taking a seat in a mini-train, visitors are led on an adventure tour of 30 minutes. They will pass through different regions, including the vast land of China, a river gully in South America, a plateau of South Africa, a forest in India, the Australian bush, the West African wetlands and the grassland in East Africa. With luck, tourists may come across various animals such as the Giant Pandas, antelopes, Himalayan bears, lions, cheetahs or the three-coloured wolves.

#### Adventure on Foot

This route will pass seven regions, allowing visitors to experience adventures in the mountains, the desert, the rainforest and polar areas, in addition to the Snake Exhibition Hall and the Children's Zoo. Some scenes might include groups of argali and yaks gathering under the soft moonlight; kangaroos wandering freely on a vast Australian plain; an owl blinking at you in the rainforest; or a flying squirrel landing quietly on the tree beside you. Of course, the animals are all at their most active during the night.

#### The Moon Theatre

The top-notch circus show is an additional highlight, where hundreds of foreign and domestic artists lead animals such as kangaroos, hippos and giant elephants in entertaining performances.

Opening Hours: 18:00-00:00 (year round)

Admission for Night Zoo: 100 yuan (set: 140 yuan)

Ticket for Moon Theatre: 50 yuan

Accommodation: Panyu Xiangjiang Hotel, Guangzhou Standard twin room: 360 yuan

Add: Yingbin Road, Dashi, Panyu Tel: (20) 8478 6888



## New Spot

### Large Primeval Forest found in the Three Gorges of the Yangtse

#### Hubei

Covering an area of 14,000 hectares, the forest is located in northwestern Yichang, on the borders of Xingshan and Baokang counties, in Central China's Hubei Province. About a quarter of the forest belongs to a primeval forest, which is the largest of its kind so far discovered in the Three Gorges area. The highest mountain peak in this area is 1,982 metres above sea level, and the lowest altitude is 900 metres.

Scientists have found 437 varieties of high-grade plants, including more than 10 rare or endangered varieties. Among the animals living in the forest, there are more than 10 rare species under state protection, such as the river deer, black bear and macaque. In the forest, there are eight waterfalls and 48 basins. All of these have won this place the reputation of being as beautiful as the Zhangjiajie Scenic Area in Hunan, which has been listed as a World Heritage site.

Meanwhile, several spots of historical interest have also been found in this area. These include a thousand-metre-long corridor built into the cliff surface, left by Li Laiheng, the leader of a peasant uprising, and the ruins of Taoist temples and churches. The Yichang government plans to develop this area into a tourist destination with over 100 scenic spots within a few years.



## Trains on Track for Higher Speeds

The Ministry of Railways will further accelerate the speed of trains this year, one year ahead of schedule. Trains linking major Chinese cities, including Beijing, Hong Kong, Guangzhou, Wuhan and Chengdu, as well as some cities in Jiangxi and Zhejiang, will see a new round of speed increases in the latter half of the year.

China has had three nationwide speed increases, in 1997, 1998 and 2000. Trains on the relevant lines are travelling at more than 120 km per hour. The ministry has announced a 3.5 billion yuan (US\$423 million) package for renovations in preparation for the fourth nationwide speed-up.



## Beijing: Forestation Project to Curb Sandstorms

A 670-hectare forestation project will be launched soon in the desert area in the hinterland of Hebei Province, northwest of Beijing, in the hope of curbing air pollution in the Chinese capital. The project will be funded by the China International Trust & Investment Corp (CITIC). According to the contract signed between the company and the government of Xuanhua County, Hebei Province, CITIC will provide 5 million yuan (US\$600,000) for planting trees, bushes and grasses in the Huangyangtan Desert in Xuanhua County. The county government should see the project completed in three years.

The Huangyangtan Desert extends across 10,000 hectares and is one of the three major deserts that threaten Beijing with sandstorms. About 200 hectares of the desert have been planted with trees over recent years. The government of Hebei Province expresses its full support for the project, hoping it will boost Beijing's bid for the 2008 Olympic Games.

## Visa-Free Policy for Tourists to Hainan

Hainan Island in the South China Sea is an intoxicating tourist destination with blue seas, white sands and all-year-round warm climate. Hainan Province has announced its visa-free policy to attract more overseas tourists to the island.

Citizens with passports from about 20 countries are entitled to the visa-free policy when they come to visit Hainan as part of a tourist group for less than 15 days. These countries include: Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, South Korea, the Philippines, Indonesia, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Austria, Russia, Switzerland, Sweden, Spain, the Netherlands, the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Each tourist group must consist of at least five people and the group must be received by an international travel agency authorised by the State Tourism Administration, and registered in Hainan Province. Tourists must enter the province as part of a tour group with the names of the group members listed, upon which they will be exempt from filling in disembarkation cards.

Citizens of Hong Kong or Macao may go back and forth to the mainland if they produce documentation proving that they are citizens of Hong Kong and Macao. Citizens from Taiwan can apply for a pass exclusively for Taiwan citizens at the entry port. They can also register for going back and forth to the mainland at their port of entry.

Furthermore, tourists or individuals from any country or region that has diplomatic relations or official trade with China may apply for entry visas at their port of entry in Hainan.

## Tibetan Monastery to Receive Facelift by Hebei Experts

North China's Hebei Province will dispatch archaeologists to renovate the Saga Monastery in the Tibet Autonomous Region in Southwest China. According to the agreement signed between Hebei and Tibet in January this year, Hebei's specialists in ancient architecture and cultural relics will help survey, design and supervise the renovation of the Saga monastery, the earliest monastery of the Saga Sect of Tibetan Buddhism.

The monastery was built in 1073 and expanded in 1260. It is famous for its large collection of Buddhist classics and Tibetan books. Since the northern section has been in ruins for a long time, rebuilding will be confined to the southern portion of the monastery only, which covers an area of 45,000 square metres. The estimated cost is 70 million yuan (US\$8.4 million).

Tibet now has 1,700 historical and cultural sites, 18 of them listed under state protection and 64 of them under the care of the regional cultural relic department. Over the past two decades, the Central Government of China has allocated 300 million (US\$36.15 million) for the protection of Tibetan historical sites and cultural relics.



## News

### Special Tours of Wanquan River on Hainan Island

**Hainan** Qionghai City in Hainan Province has recently introduced a series of package tours to the upper, middle, and lower flows of the Wanquan River.

Rafting is the first activity to be introduced on the upper flow route, offering tourists an opportunity to experience China's sub-tropical habitat in an exhilarating yet safe way. Cruising tours in the middle flow route are dedicated to showcasing the elegance of the island; and the lower flow route passes from Bo'ao to Haikou. The Bo'ao Golden Coast Spring Hotel provides state-of-the-art services to all visitors.

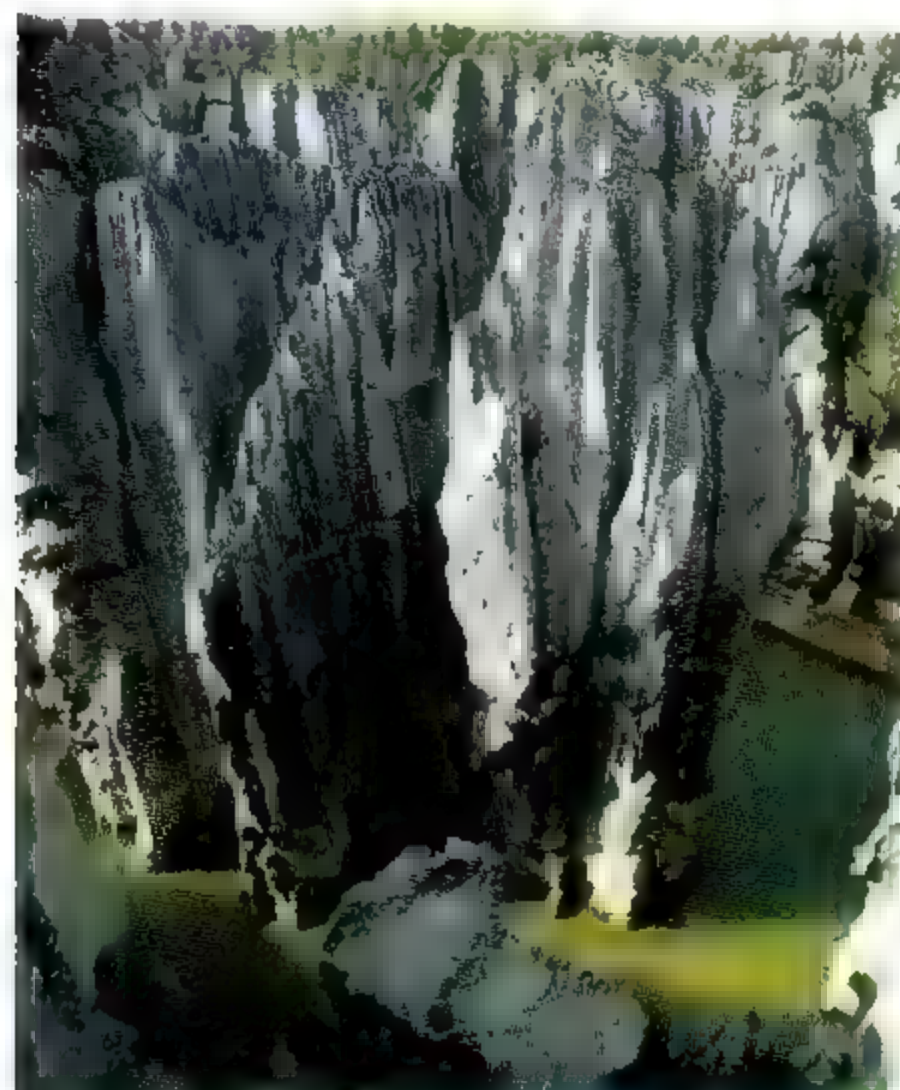


## Travel

### View the Stone Forest from the Sky

**Yunnan** Many of our readers may have been to the Stone Forest situated in Yunnan Province. Now a new programme being promoted in the scenic area offers you a chance to observe and admire the stone formations from another angle — the sky. After a three-month trial period, the Stone Forest Travel Airlines officially introduced the sky tour of the Stone Forest on January 1, 2001. At present, the company is the only airline in Southwest China permitted to operate sky tours.

Two light aircrafts are used for the air tours over the stone forest, at a speed of 240 km/ hr, carrying a maximum of 17 people to a height of up to 300 metres.



Formed more than 200 million years ago, the Stone Forest is situated in the Lunan Yi Autonomous County, about 80 km southeast of Kunming, the provincial capital of Yunnan. In this 350-square-kilometre area are stone forests, caves, lakes and waterfalls. Stones and rocks, young and old, have grown naturally into the shapes of peaks, pillars and other motifs.

## News

### Ancient Statue Unearthed from Western Xia Mausoleum

**Ningxia** A group of Ningxia archaeologists has recently discovered the remains of an ancient statue called Miaoyinniao (Wonderful Voice Bird), from the top layer of soil covering Tomb No.3 of the Western Xia Mausoleum.

The statue, carved with a human-like head and bird-like body, is thought to have the same sublime beauty as the Sphinx as well as the ancient Greek statue with the broken arm, Venus.

According to Du Yubing, deputy director of the Ningxia Archaeology Research Centre, there is only a handful of written records about this bird in history books. All we know is that it was a kind of bird living in the Himalayas which sang beautifully. Buddhism regards it as the bird of the Western Paradise (Sukhavati). *The Old Tang Book* mentions that some Central Asian countries had given the Tang Emperor such a bird as a tribute. If this record is true, it may well have really existed at that time.

The statue is a grouped model, in which carvings of the head and facial features are more detailed. Its palms are joined. Compared with the clay sculptures found in Dunhuang, this one shows more influence of Western culture. More than 450 segments of three such bird sculptures have been unearthed from the same site.

## New Spot

### Ming Seigneur's Graveyard to Be Opened, Guilin

**Guangxi** The Ming-dynasty Jingjiang Seigneur's Graveyard, with 11 tombs of feudal lords and over 300 tombs of lower-ranking officials and their relatives, plus its underground tomb chambers, will be turned into a tourist site within two years. The 107-square-kilometre graveyard is on the outskirts of Guilin, Guangxi Province, and excavation has been taking place for 10 years.

The 20 million yuan (US\$2.4 million) rebuilding budget is supported by the State Planning Commission and is based on a restoration blueprint provided by archaeologists. The Jingjiang Seigneur was a position created by Emperor Zhu Yuanzhang, founder of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), to administer the southwestern section of the empire. Over the past few years, a large variety of relics have been unearthed from the site.

According to the plan, a theme park based on the relics will be built in the Yaoshan Mountain area near the graveyard to add more charm to the archaeological site. The graveyard is expected to become another popular tourist spot in Guilin, renowned for its limestone formations.





## Event

### Guiyang Investment and Trade Fair to be held in Hong Kong

**Guizhou** The 2001 Guiyang Investment and Trade Fair will be held on April 10-11 at the Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre. It will be the first of its kind ever sponsored by Guiyang Municipal Government to promote and enhance economic cooperation within the city. This is seen as a golden opportunity to help initiate trade and tourism in the area.

About 100 representatives from state-owned and private enterprises and joint ventures from Guiyang, capital of Guizhou Province, will participate in the fair as exhibitors. Visitors will be largely exposed to a comprehensive picture of the city's latest developments, including its industry, tourism and infrastructure.

Meanwhile, about 100 promising, large-scale and advanced projects will be up for investment at the fair. One such project for producing diodes and triodes is seeking an investment of US\$10.9 million, and another, the establishment of a green belt around the city, seeks an investment of US\$20.2 million. A news conference including a performance of folk music and dance as well as a floral float will also be held.

The city of Guiyang is abundant in scenic spots. Among the developed scenic areas are Huaxi, Baihua and Hongfeng lakes, Qianling Mountain, and the Kaiyang Canyon.



## Event

### International Coloured Sand Sculpturing Contest in Luliang

**Yunnan** In a contest to be held in March 2001 in Luliang County, Yunnan Province, the versatility of sand will be highlighted through the digging, piling, carving and painting of the local coloured sands. The art of sand sculpturing incorporates the essence of athletics, entertainment, drawing and carving, as well as architecture. Since any preservation of this kind of art work is limited, they are popularly known as "short-lived sculptures".

Covering an area of a few dozen square kilometres, the coloured sand forest in Luliang is a wonderful natural landform consisting mainly of red, yellow and white sands, and to a lesser degree, some green, blue and grey. The colour of the sand forest also varies in appearance according to the season, climate and the angle of the sun or moon, all of which contribute to the range of visual effects.

Hosted by the Yunnan Provincial Tourism Administration, the People's Government of Qujing City and the World Sand Carving Association, this contest will focus on the theme "Fantasy of a Thousand Years". Many sand-carving masters have been invited to participate in the event and demonstrate their skills in person. After his investigation of the site, the president of the World Sand Sculptors Association said that he would promote the contest as one of the major sand sculpturing events in the world.

## Travel

### High Time for a Tour to Mount Qingcheng

**Sichuan** Situated in Dujiangyan City in Sichuan Province, Mount Qingcheng is known as the birthplace of Taoism. Since it was included in the UNESCO World Heritage list in 2000, more and more people have become interested in visiting this famous Taoist land.

Legacies left on Qingcheng Mountain include the Shangqing Palace, Flag Pole Stone, Revenge Valley, Jianfu Temple, Tianshi (Heavenly Teacher) Cave, Master's Hall, Zhaoyang Cave, Yuqing Temple and White Cloud Temple. It is also said that Zhang Daoling, the founding master of Taoism, began to preach here during the late Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220). Zhang Daqian, the century's master painter, stayed for over four years on the mountain and created almost 1,000 drawings related to it.

Tourists can fly to Chengdu, then take scheduled buses from the Chengdu Railway Station or Ximen (West Gate) Bus Terminus to Qingcheng Mountain.

Suggested itineraries:

Spend two days touring the mountain. To start with, you can take a six-kilometre trail from Jianfu Temple to Shangqing Palace, passing the Natural Pictures and the Tianshi Cave. From here, walking five kilometres more, you'll reach Shangqing Palace. Coming down the mountain, you follow a seven-kilometre trail, visiting Yunu Cave, Siwang Pavilion, Dazi (Big Character) Rock and Shixun Peak on your way back to Jianfu Palace. If time allows, the surrounding scenic spots such as Xiong'er Mountain and Yinghua Mountain are also worth a visit.





FEATURE STORY

# Travelling Southern Xinjiang Along the Silk Road

*Photos & article by  
Xie Guanghui*





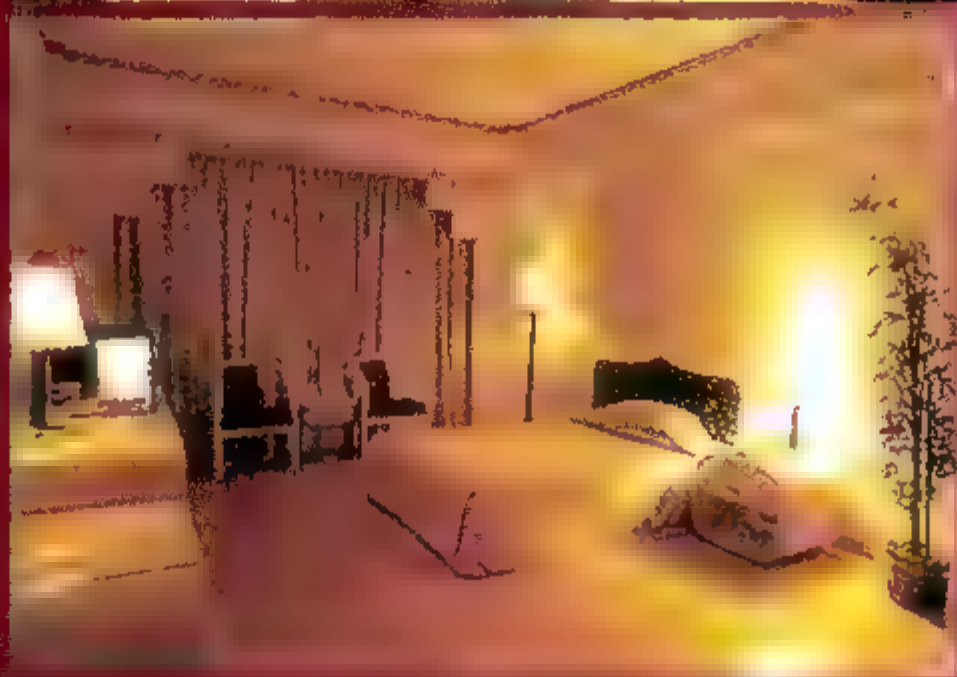


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**Taklimakan Desert Highway**



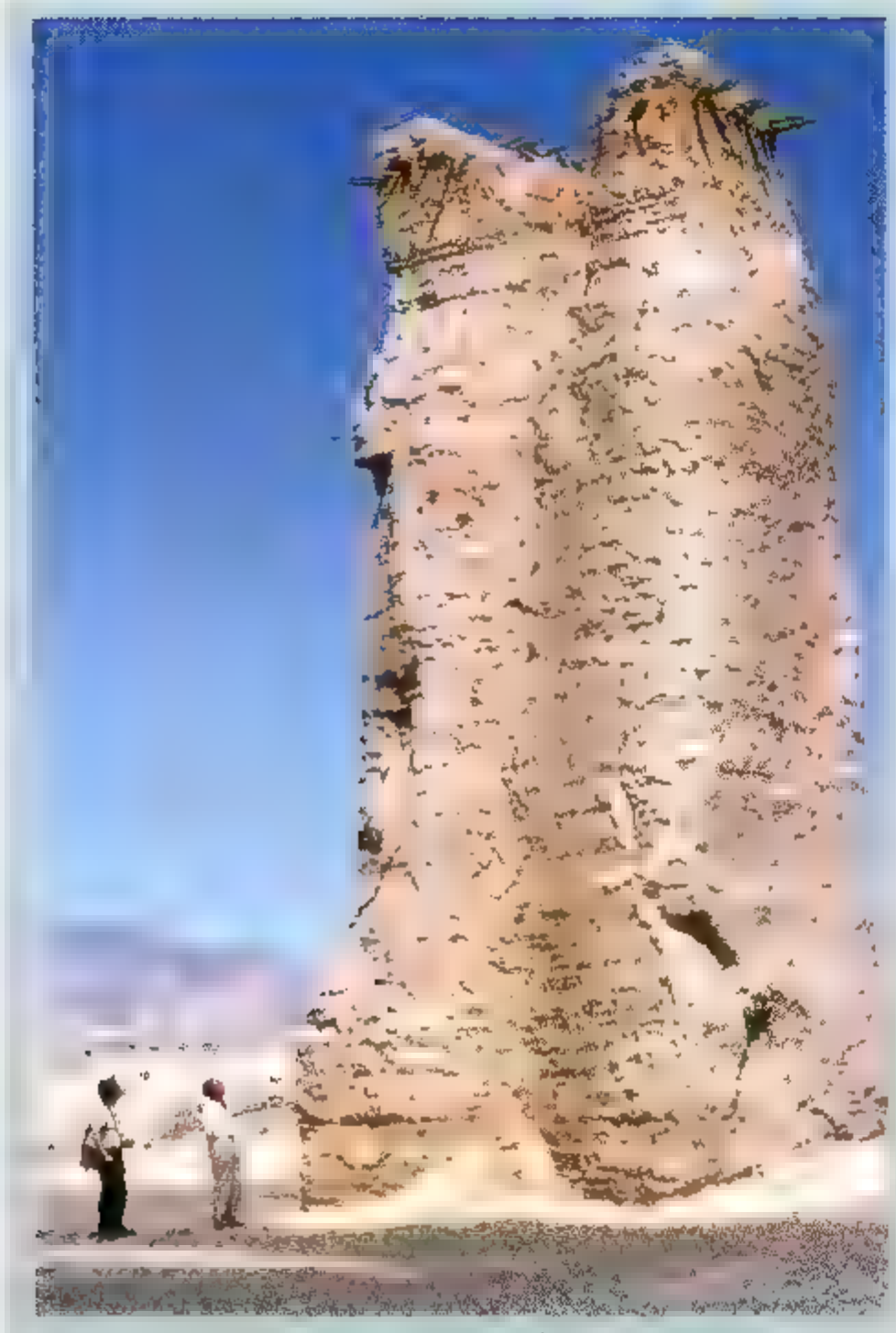
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**Mt. Kizil at Kuqa**



**Kuqa Kizirgarkar Beacon Tower**





After entering Xinjiang, the Silk Road branches out into three: the northern, the middle and the southern roads. The southern road extends along the northern foot of Kunlun Mountains and passes Anxi (today's Iran) as it heads towards the Indian Ocean. The central road stretches along the southern foot of the Tianshan Mountains and passes over the Pamirs to extend into Central Asia and Iran. The arduous journeys undertaken by several historical figures have added a romantic tinge to these two roads. Zhang Qian of the Western Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 24) visited the Western Region as an imperial envoy; Monk Xuan Zang of the Tang Dynasty (618-907) went to India to seek Buddhist sutra, and Marco Polo came to China in the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368).

We invite you to join us on a round trip, first going through the central road to Kashi, then returning via the southern road. We will take you to Kuqa to revel in the ancient Qiuci music and dance, to Kashi to watch the grand congregation of Muslims in the famous Id Kah Mosque and to Hotan to select jade and buy silk and carpets. Then together we'll travel along a highway running through the Taklimakan Desert, known as the "sea of death", to explore the unique landscape and colourful folk customs of southern Xinjiang.





Our vehicle was jammed for over four hours in the snowy and foggy Tianshandaban. In the rear view mirror, I noticed a long line of vehicles trailing behind us down the zigzagging mountain highway, making it impossible for us to turn back to the Xinyuan County seat. Alarmed by the prospect of spending the night in the cold, wet mountains, I pulled my jacket tightly around myself and asked, "How low can the temperature go at night?" Ma Tao, the driver, turned to me and said, "It's not the cold you should be worrying about, it's the risk of a landslide. If that happens, when we are discovered by archaeologists after tens of thousands of years, we'll have all turned into fossils." His joking remark produced a cold shudder in me. We were indeed in a dangerous situation.

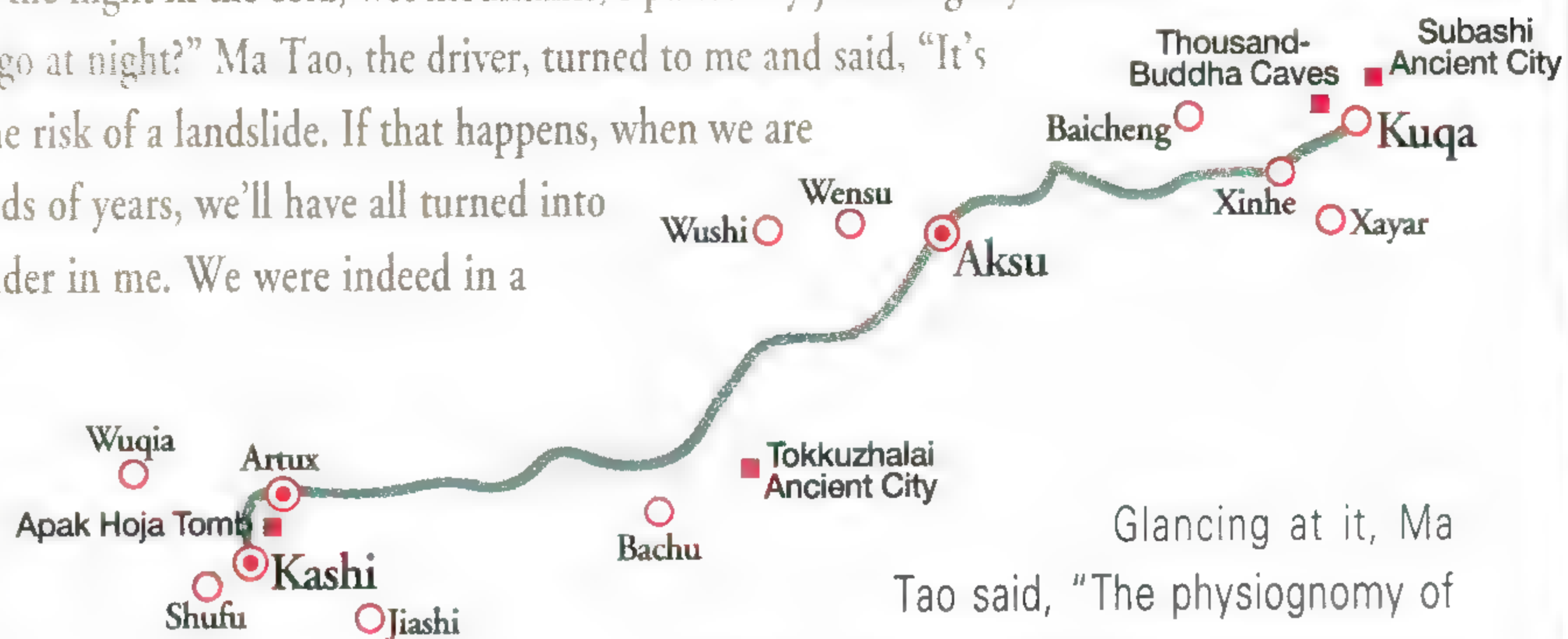
### Entering Southern Xinjiang

Suddenly, we noticed some agitation ahead with people running back to their vehicles, and at long last the cars began to move forward. Ma Tao quickly started the engine and our vehicle jolted past the section of highway just repaired from damage caused by a landslide. With mud thrown up by the rear wheel plastering the rear windshield, our vehicle veered from left to right, as if trying to escape some mighty ogre. Having passed the Greater and Lesser Dragon Pools, I noticed that the grassland on the mountain gradually turned less green and more patchy and weathered. God knows how many barren mountain cliffs we had passed and how many twists and turns we had made when we finally came to a steep mountain pass in the Tianshan Mountains. Under the blazing sun, the dark bitumen highway stretched on into the desert like a shining sword. I had passed through other deserts where there were always some signs of life, such as desert grass and flowers. Yet we saw no sign of them here. Compared with the northern slopes of the Tianshan Mountains that were covered with verdant pines and lush grass, the southern slopes of the mountains here resembled a patch of scorched earth. In the distance, however, we could see many carts pulled by donkeys trotting through the dry road, their hoofs sending up fine dust. A damask colour danced before our eyes as a blinding sun scorched the land.

"Is this southern Xinjiang?" I asked, narrowing my eyes into slits.

"Yes, we must be in Kuqa of southern Xinjiang," Ma Tao replied, putting on his sunglasses.

No vegetation and no soil for cultivation whatsoever. All this came so suddenly. Doubtfully, I opened a map.



Glancing at it, Ma Tao said, "The physiognomy of Xinjiang resembles exactly the right half of the character 'jiang', with two basins clamped amidst three mountain ranges. In the north is the undulating Altay; in the south are the towering Kunlun and Altun; and in the middle stands the Tianshan, which divides Xinjiang into two sections, the northern and southern,



#### Previous page:

A group of Muslims stops for a prayer service while travelling along the Hotan-Yutian Highway.

1. A donkey-drawn cart is the most popular means of transport in Kuqa.
2. Houses in Kuqa reflect the influence of Muslim culture.
3. A restaurant at the Kuqa bazaar.
4. A melon stand by the highway, where watermelon is sold for 0.3 yuan per kilogram.



and gives rise to the two basins, Jungar and Tarim respectively. Kuqa is located in the middle of the southern slope of the Tianshan Mountains. From now on, we should have no major problems ahead." Finishing his words, he lit a cigarette and lowered the window. A wisp of blue smoke floated up from between his fingers and instantly escaped through the gap.

### The Ancient City of Qiuci

A laurel green hue appeared on the horizon. Gradually, the highway became lined with densely planted tall and straight trees. The green extended to infinity, and the sunshine filtering through the trees swept over our faces. Finally, we arrived at Pilang





Yutian embroidered hats



Bosten Lake



The Apak Hoja Tomb at Kashi



The Id Kak Mosque at Kashi



Tianshan Sacred Wood Garden

- |  |                                   |  |   |
|--|-----------------------------------|--|---|
|  | capital city of autonomous region |  | national border                                     |
|  | prefectural city                  |  | boundary of province or autonomous region           |
|  | county seat                       |  | railway   |
|  | mountain pass                     |  | Ancient Silk Road                                   |
|  | mountain/peak (mt)                |  | Modern Silk Road                                    |
|  | scenic spots, ruins of Silk Road  |  | circular route of the reporter in Southern Xinjiang |



Village in Kuqa County to visit the ruins of the ancient city of Qiuci.

In ancient times, Kuqa was called Qiuci, which was then a relatively large state in the Western Region. In the Tang Dynasty when the famous Monk Xuan Zang came back from his trip to India, he passed through Qiuci. In his *Notes on the Western Region of Great Tang*, he commented, "(Qiuci) leads all the states in the region in pipe and string music." In fact, as early as in the Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220), Qiuci music had been recorded in the Central Plains. By the Northern and Southern Dynasties (420-589), a Qiuci musician called Suzhipo had become very famous for his skill at playing the pipa (a plucked musical instrument with fretted fingerboard) and was invited to the Western Turk court as a professional player. In 567, when a princess of the Western Turk Kingdom was married to a prince of the Northern Zhou, Suzhipo followed the princess into the hinterland. Qiuci music had seven notes and was played with 18 musical instruments, including

wuxian (a five-stringed musical instrument), pipa, flute, bamboo pipe and xiao (vertical bamboo flute). At that time, a band composed of musicians playing so many instruments must have been an impressive sight. Shortly afterwards, the music and dance introduced by Suzhipo became very popular in the hinterland areas of China.

Previously, "refined music" was in vogue in the Central Plains, yet it was not very popular and was only limited to royal courts and official circles. After Suzhipo introduced Qiuci music into the heartland of China, this new form of music combined with dance cast a great influence on the development of Chinese music and operas. Evidence of the influence of Qiuci music can be witnessed both in the 28-tune music of the Sui and Tang dynasties and operas in the Song and Yuan dynasties. Although the melody of Qiuci music is no longer heard today, the liveliness of Qiuci dance can be preserved in







Travelling Southern Xinjiang Along the Silk Road





front of us had reduced their speed and formed a queue along the highway. It turned out that the bridge across the river had been damaged by flood a few days before and all vehicles had to cross the river slowly via a temporary raft bridge erected by the local PLA unit. As a vehicle drove onto the bridge, the raft bridge would sink deep into the water. The roaring currents carrying masses of sand dashed against the flat-bottomed rafts, sending up chocolate-coloured splashes.

"The flood in southern Xinjiang is dreadful, isn't it?" I commented. Ma Tao replied, "It doesn't actually have much to do with the flood. The major problem lies with the loose sandy riverbed. The piles of the bridge were driven deep into the sand. They are supposed to be very solid and reliable. Yet the flood often washes away the sand, exposing the piles. Thus the river constantly changes its course. There's little you can do in this situation."

It is common knowledge that bridges should be built over a more stable riverbed. Yet, it is almost impossible to do so with the Tarim River, the largest inland river in Asia, which never ceases to display its unbridled nature. In the face of nature, it is always wise for us humans to know the limits of our strength.

Shortly before dusk, we arrived at Aksu. Without any rest, we hurried to the Aksu Farm. The farm belongs to the Xinjiang Farming and Reclamation Corps, which used to be a unit of the PLA founded in the 1950s with General Wang Zhen as its commander.

"There is not much rainfall here, but we are still afraid of rain," Yang Xing, deputy head of the farm, told us. "In Xinjiang, most of the land has a high content of saline and alkali. Whenever there is rain, the saline and alkali will rise to the surface to form a hard crust that can choke any crops to death."

"How do you water the crops if there is no rain?" I asked.

"With the water from the melting snow over the Tianshan Mountains," he answered. "The water is diverted into man-made irrigation ditches. It is used to moisten the land and, more importantly, to dissolve the saline and alkaline content

before sowing. We have to water the land twice between sowing and harvesting, so water is precious here."

As he spoke, he used his *kantuman* skilfully to flatten some spots along the ditch. The *kantuman* resembles an iron shovel, the only difference being that its upper iron part, which is sharp and wide, forms an angle with its wooden handle. It can be used as a hoe and is a farm tool unique to southern Xinjiang.

### Tianshan Sacred Wood Garden

At four o'clock in the morning, we quietly bid farewell to Aksu and drove westward. After passing the seat of Wensu County, we turned and drove northwestward for more than 60 kilometres. It was dawn by then and the grey sky had turned bright and blue. The highway kept ascending and the mountains became more and more barren. Everywhere there were grotesque rocks sheltering under weathered bushes. Suddenly, the car drew to a halt. Ma Tao indicated to me with a nod, "There. The Tianshan Sacred Wood Garden." Looking over, I saw an oasis lying on undulating hills.

The Tianshan Sacred Wood Garden is also called Kurmishiatam Mazar. Legend tells us that in the 11th century, an imam from Saudi Arabia led over 2,000 Muslims to the Western Region of China to carry out missionary work. They clashed with the local people and retreated

to this spot. In the fight, most of the people died. The imam, also badly hurt and eventually dying, was buried there, thus turning the place into a huge graveyard. The entire garden lay under the green shade of densely growing trees. A few paces into the wood, I came

upon an ancient tree, several hundred years old and lying prone on the ground. It was uprooted but its leaves remained green. Further into the wood, I saw many similar trees.

Some of them appeared to be dead, yet new twigs were still shooting out of withered branches.

The life of the oasis derives from a clear spring at the top of the hill. The sun filtered through the trees to cast its light over a trickling rivulet that moistened the grounds of the oasis. The local Muslims call it the "sacred-water spring". Between spring and autumn every year, the local Muslims come here to pay homage. Sometimes, the number can reach tens of thousands, creating a spectacular sea of white caps as they gather to pray.

1. Many ancient trees are found in the Tianshan Sacred Wood Garden, a rare phenomenon in this area.
2. The highway going through the Tianshandaban.
3. The Kizil Thousand-Buddha Caves.
4. Exquisitely made Uyghur hats.
5. Knife, a unique handicraft of Kuqa.
6. The Greater Dragon Pond at the southern foot of the Tianshandaban.
7. The Grand Mosque in the Old City of Kuqa.







the murals of the Kizil Thousand-Buddha Caves.

### Kizil Thousand-Buddha Caves

The Kizil Thousand-Buddha Caves are over 60 km from Kuqa. The caves are scattered over the cliffs in and out of the Quanshui (Spring

Water) Gully in Sulete and are divided into four major groups. The Guxi (West Gully) group boasts the highest number of caves. The Kizil Thousand-Buddha Caves were carved roughly at the same time as the Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang, starting in the 3rd-4th century. It is one of the earliest and largest grotto groups in China. Kizil Thousand-Buddha Caves can be grouped into two types: the Caitya caves used for worshipping Buddhist statues and the Vihara caves used as monks' dwellings and meditation sanctuaries. Caves in the latter group have windows in front and stoves to one side. Due to many long years of weathering, most of the alleyways from one cave to another have suffered some degree of damage. New cement corridors and balustrades have been built along these alleyways. Even though incongruous with their ancient surroundings, they provide an essential service to tourists.

All the Buddhist statues originally in the caves are gone. This situation may have

something to do with the changes occurring in people's

religious beliefs over the years. Despite periodic plundering by foreign archaeologists and adventurers, however, some 10,000 square metres of frescoes have survived, featuring Buddhist images, Jataka stories, animals, landscapes, flowers, and many other designs. In terms of murals on the themes of "source and result" and Jataka stories, the Kizil Thousand-Buddha Caves surpasses the Mogao Grottoes, thus earning the reputation of China's No. 1 in this respect.

Among the murals are also scenes depicting social subjects, such as warriors wearing armour and riding strong horses, Qiuci patrons wearing double-collar robes with buttons down the front and long boots, princes of various states attired in regal costumes, farmers furrowing the field with ploughs pulled by two oxen, craftsmen making pottery.... Indeed, the murals offer many insights into the different walks of life in various ethnic groups in the Western Region at that time. The mural in Cave No. 81 delighted me in particular: the dancing girl is twisting her waist and turning her head to the right, with her right leg bent and her left placed behind. A long flowery scarf flows from her hands. Her body is flexible and poised and her skirt is flying up, producing an exquisitely poetic image — a vivid reproduction of ancient Qiuci dance. Accompanying the main dancer are dancing musicians playing various instruments, every one of them graceful in posture and movement.

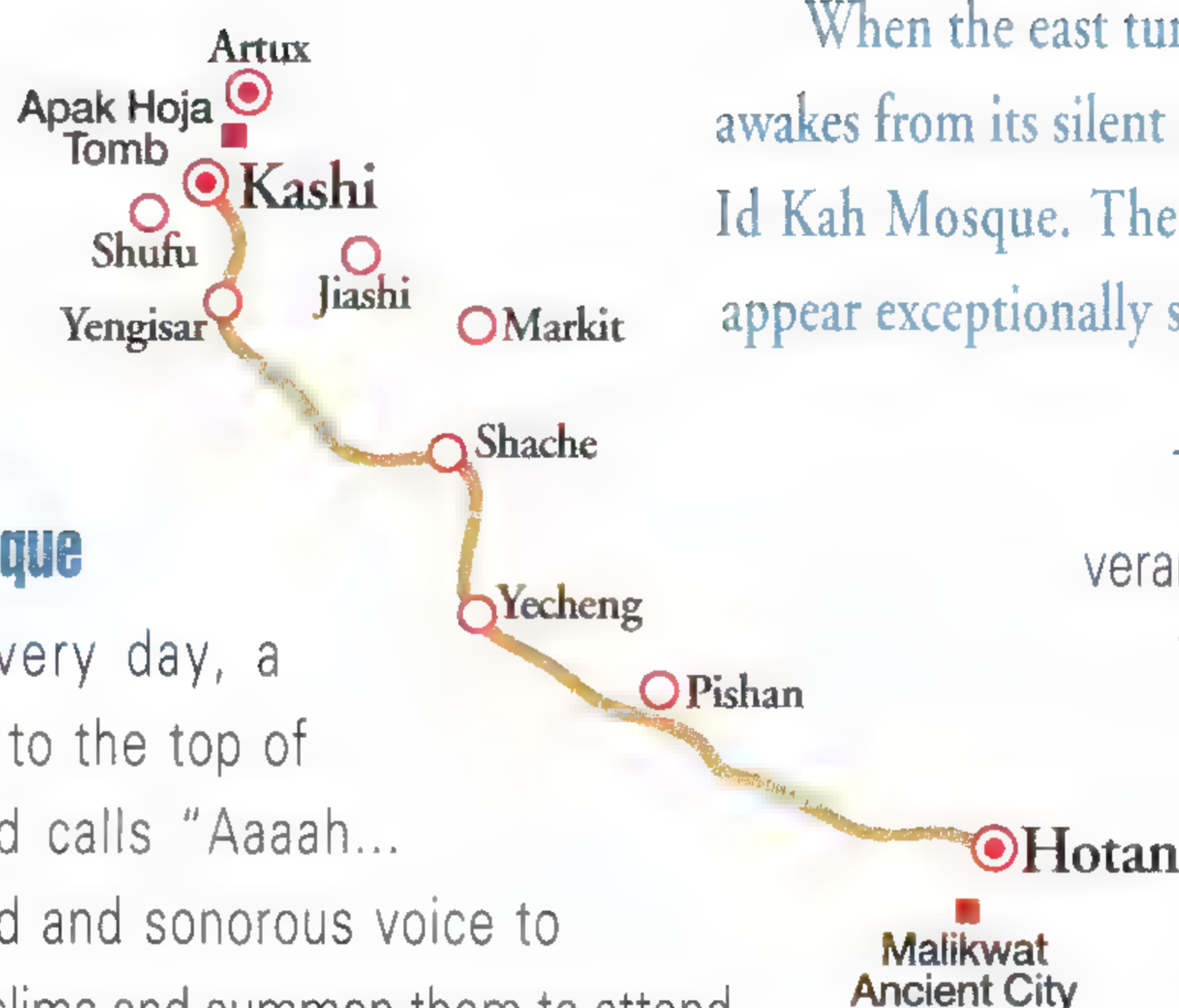
In the 5th and 6th centuries, Buddhism reached the height of its splendour in Qiuci. Of all the caves preserved, half were built during this period. New methods were applied to mural painting, with stress on colour contrast and prominence given to diamond patterns. In the 7th and 8th centuries, the scale of caves being carved gradually diminished and the content of the murals tended to become stylised and simple, emitting an atmosphere of decline. Later, the folks in Qiuci converted to Islam and Buddhism gradually lost its influence.

### The Tarim River

We left the Kizil Thousand-Buddha Caves and drove towards Aksu. Approaching the Tarim River, we noticed that the vehicles in

1. Muslim pilgrims come to the Tianshan Sacred Wood Garden for worshipping every year in early summer.
2. The characteristic Aidis silk sold at the Kuqa bazaar.
3. Muslims never escape a prayer, even in a journey.
4. The Tianshan Sacred Wood Garden is a Muslim graveyard with several dozen tombs.





When the east turns bright and Venus disappears, Kashi, a border town in Xinjiang, awakes from its silent night with the sun's first rays falling upon the towers of the famous Id Kah Mosque. The white domes and crescents above the gate towers on both sides appear exceptionally solemn in the cool morning light.

### Id Kah Mosque

At dawn every day, a muezzin climbs to the top of the minaret and calls "Aaaah... men" in his loud and sonorous voice to wake up the Muslims and summon them to attend the morning prayer meeting. Awakened by his calls echoing in the cool and fresh morning air, the local Muslims step out

The prayer hall of the Id Kah Mosque faces east. It is a huge veranda over 2,000 square metres in size with a ceiling supported by 100 carved wooden columns. Decorating the ceiling are fine wooden carvings and painted patterns of flowers and plants, but no images of human beings or animals. The whole magnificent structure resembles a giant tent. The interior of the hall is empty, with only a deep shrine in the centre of the west wall. Placed in the shrine is a stepped dais with handrails, evoking a holy atmosphere.

When Prophet Muhammad founded the religion, he proclaimed in Mecca, "Yours is the one and only God. There are no Gods other than Allah." This explains Islam's opposition to polytheism and its basic principle of worshipping only Allah. Usually, the First Maola (imam) in the mosque leads the prayer. The followers will enter the hall one after another and seat themselves in neat rows. For those who cannot fit into the hall, they will unfold rugs they have brought with them, take a bow and kneel down outside the hall to recite the Koran together with those inside. When the prayer comes to an end, the congregation leaves the courtyard in single file and slow motion, leaving behind only those who have missed the prayer.

A grand Islamic structure located in the centre of Kashi, the Id Kah Mosque was first built more than 500 years ago. Previously, the place had been a cemetery. In 1442, Shak Smilza, the ruler of Kashgar, had the mosque built to allow him to pray for his deceased relatives. In 1538, to commemorate his deceased uncle, Ubli Atibek had the mosque extended. In the years that followed, the mosque was extended and renovated several times until it finally took the form and reached the scale we see today.

It was Djumah (Friday) when we visited the mosque. The doorway of the mosque was packed with young boys and girls selling water in cups. In their clear sweet voices, they shouted, "Buy a cup please. Buy a cup of fresh water on the day of Djumah," their bright eyes wide with anxiety and hope. Women were forbidden to enter the mosque. On the square outside, we saw Uygur women in brown veils respectfully presenting fried cakes with honeyed or sugar, pomegranates and milk tea to the Muslims, as if presenting offerings to Allah for blessing. Usually, five prayer meetings are held in the Id Kah Mosque every day, the people coming and going like the surging tide. The atmosphere there is more jubilant on Lesser Bairam and Corban, the most significant Islamic festivals, when thousands upon thousands of Muslims come to pay homage to Allah. Suonas are blown and drums beaten on the gate towers. The people play their five-stringed rewapus, douda'ers and other musical instruments



1. Tens of thousands of people gather at the Id Kah Mosque on the day of the Corban Festival. (by Song Shijing)
2. Musicians of the Daolang Dance in Markit. (by Shi Baoxiu)
3. Devoted Muslims join the congregation at the Id Kah Mosque.

of their warm and cosy homes and walk along the major streets and small lanes towards the Id

Kah Square. Among them are white-bearded calm old men wearing white caps and long robes, pious middle-aged adults and innocent, active children wearing embroidered square caps. On their way to the prayer meeting, the people follow the pathway around a limpid pond, cross the courtyard under the green shade of leafy trees, go through a fence-like low wall, climb a staircase, remove their shoes and with quiet reverence, enter the prayer hall.

Generally speaking, the structure of this Islamic mosque embodies a kind of oasis in the heart of the desert. This is perhaps related to the life of the Arabs in early history, who for quite some time led a nomadic life. In the days when they wandered through the great desert in search of a spiritual habitat, their greatest desire was to see a huge golden dome in the distance, a sanctuary harbouring shady trees and ample water for washing and drinking. Once inside the mosque, they sit quietly on the ground to pray.



## Tips for the Traveller

Kuqa is divided into three parts, namely, the Old City, the New City and the East City. The Old City occupies the west part of the city. The Tianshan Road is connected with the Ürümqi-Kashi Highway in the east and the Kuqa Bridge in the west. In the downtown area are the Kuqa Temple and Resitan Mosque. The majority of residents in Kuqa are Uygurs. The streets are lined with shops and handicraft workshops as well as residences in typical Uygur style. The streets are crowded with Uygurs in their traditional costume and speaking their own tongue.

You can tour the Old City of Kuqa either by walking around or hiring a donkey-drawn cart. Kuqa is known as the "home of apricots". In late June when the apricots are ripe, the courtyard of every Uygur farmer family is packed full of baskets with red, yellow, green and white apricots. Kuqa produces many different apricots, of which the most famous is the white variety. They are smaller than other varieties and round, with a smooth skin. The pulp is fine, yellowish and juicy, and tastes very good.

To visit the Kizil Thousand-Buddha Caves, it is better to hire a taxi or join the "Kuqa One-Day Trip" organised by a local travel agency.

### Kuqa International Travel Service

Add: 93 West Tianshan Road, Kuqa; Tel: (997) 712 1130

Tianshan Sacred Wood Garden is located some 60 km northwest of the Wensu County seat. Covering an area of some 45 hectares, it is 1,700 metres above sea level. It houses several dozen ancient tombs for Muslims. Located by the border, there is no direct bus service going there. If you travel there by taxi, you still need to apply for special permission and undergo complicated formalities. The Wensu County Foreign and Overseas Chinese Tourism Office has launched the "Tianshan Sacred Wood Garden One-Day Trip", charging 50 yuan per person (including transport, admission and lunch).

**Wensu County Foreign and Overseas Chinese Tourism Office** Tel: (997) 453 2169



## Transport of Aksu

### Buses from Aksu to Other Places in Xinjiang

Name	Distance (km)	Fare (yuan)	Departure Time
Ürümqi	1,012	133-153 (sleeper)	14:00-19:00 (hourly)
Kashi	462	43 (ordinary seat); 65-75 (sleeper)	9:00 and 21:00 (summer); 10:00 and 20:00 (winter)
Kuqa	262	21 (ordinary seat)	10:00-19:00 (hourly)
Korla	542	52 (ordinary seat); 70-80 (sleeper)	10:00 and 19:00

## Hotels in Aksu

Name	Add	Tel (area code: 997)	Fax (area code: 997)	Rate (yuan) (double room)
Aksu Friendship Hotel **	65 Yingbin Road	251 3043	251 3511	220
Aksu Guesthouse **	39 Xiaonan Street	212 4148	212 3340	200-250
Aksu Hotel	9 Xinhua Road West	212 3366		56-180

## Transport of Kuqa

All trains coming from Ürümqi to Kashi stop at Kuqa. There are buses going in various directions as well as flights between Kuqa and Ürümqi.

### Buses from Kuqa to Other Places in Xinjiang

Name	Distance (km)	Fare (yuan)	Departure Time
Ürümqi	751	100-115 (sleeper)	14:00-19:00 (hourly)
Kashi	723	57 (ordinary seat) 115 (sleeper)	
Aksu	262	21 (ordinary seat)	8:00-18:00 (hourly)
Yining	530	75 (sleeper)	8:00
Bayanbulak	336	40 (ordinary seat)	
Korla	281	28 (ordinary seat)	8:00-18:00 (hourly)

## Hotels in Kuqa

Name	Add	Tel (area code: 997)	Fax (area code: 997)	Rate (yuan) (double room)
Qiuci Hotel **	93 Tianshan Road	712 2005	712 2524	280 or more
Jiaotong Hotel *	Tianshan Road	712 2682		30-60
Tongda Hotel	154 East Tianshan Road	712 2539		56-72
Kuqa Hotel	76 Jiefang Road	712 2901		100-260
Branch of Kuqa Hotel	23 Shengli Road	712 2844		160





unique to the local people, and perform the sama dance. In these festivals, the entire Id Kah Square turns into a sea of festivity.

### The Handicraft Street in Kashi

By the time the sunlight had hit the treetops, the Ustanboy Street (also known as the Handicraft Street) to the south of the Id Kah Mosque was already becoming crowded. Uygur peddlers deftly opened huge umbrellas to shade themselves from the sun. The umbrellas were propped up with thick three-metre-tall poplar poles fixed to the ground. The umbrellas were made with four one-metre-long thin rods and colourful fabric. In the shade beneath, the peddlers opened out folded beds on which they spread canvas sheets. For those selling yogurt, kabobs, bean jelly and pyramid-shaped dumplings of glutinous rice wrapped in bamboo leaves, square tables were erected in the shade.

1. This master of clay handicraft cares more about enjoying life than doing business.
2. Many Uygur men like to have their heads completely shaved.
3. Horseshoe making is an important business in Kashi.



4. Inside a Uygur family's home.
5. Uygur women chatting in a small lane in the Old City of Kashi.
6. At the big bazaar of Kashi, you can find almost everything, from needles and buttons to donkeys and cattle.

As all the shops on both sides of the street opened their doors, we realised that what we had just seen was merely the prelude to a grand show: The owners of the various small handicraft shops first wet and swept clean the

area in front of their shops. Then they shifted their tools and raw materials outside to make and sell on the spot various handicraft items. For shopkeepers selling unique Uygur musical instruments, hand-made pottery, copper kettles and small knives, they squatted amidst their supplies, tore thin strips of paper and spread them evenly with some sliced tobacco to produce their home-made cigarettes. When the cigarettes were ready, they lit them and relaxed in comfort, despite the choking smell produced by the tobacco. They did not seem to care much whether anyone was coming to buy their goods. There were also shopkeepers selling textiles, silk, clothes and caps, most of whom were Uygur women. They always held dusters in their hands and continuously cleared away any dust falling on their merchandise.

Among the numerous shops was the Ustanboy Teahouse. Some guests had just left so it appeared fairly empty. The teahouse is unique in that it does not have a single table. Along its long corridor facing the street stand a series of neatly arranged white timber boards. Sitting cross-legged on the boards are mostly old Uygur men wearing white caps. They drink tea and chat contentedly. There are often a few backpacking tourists from Europe and the Americas, most of them young. Carrying a copy of the *Lonely Planet: China*, they would walk briskly through the bustling streets, climb the narrow staircase of the teahouse, choose a place facing the street, put down their luggage, sit down cross-legged, then wave to the waiter, saying, "A cup of tea," or "Cha". The local people seem to have long got used to this sight. The foreigners, too, show little curiosity about the thick-bearded local Uygurs in their long robes and embroidered square caps. For those who travel alone, they would treat the teahouse as a place for a break. More often than not, they would take out a book to read as they drink their tea.

The street became increasingly crowded. Now and then, a horse-

drawn cart would pass by, producing ripples of clear melodious bell sounds, with a young Uygur driver sitting on a piece of rug on the cart waving his whip and shouting, "Posi! Posi! (Move out of the way)." Many carts were laden with fresh fruit and vegetables.

### Tomb of the Fragrant Imperial Concubine

Located on the outskirts of Kashi, the Tomb of the Fragrant Imperial Concubine,







Travelling Southern Xinjiang Along the Silk Road





special shops set up by the lanes to repair horseshoes. Here you will see a young Uygur boy working hard with the bellows to produce blue flames in the furnace. An older man wearing a white cap pulls out a piece of red-hot iron from the furnace and quickly beats it into the shape of the horseshoe. A cart pulls up at the shop. The driver releases the horse and ties it to a nearby wooden frame. When the driver raises the horse's leg, the smith pulls out the damaged horseshoe with pincers, takes out a crescent-shaped knife to trim the horse's toenail, then fixes on a new shoe with nails. The whole process takes no more than 10 minutes. At first, the horse usually feels uncomfortable with the new shoe, but it will get used to it in no time. A pair of new horseshoes lasts three months. Horse- or donkey-drawn carts are the main means of transport in Kashi, so horseshoe shops usually do a good business.

Almost all the residents in the Old City of Kashi are Uygurs. The men wear buttonless long robes with a slanted collar and tie their waists either with belts or a long scarf, and the women dress in short Western-style clothes and skirts. All males, both old and young, have small embroidered square caps, those for the young people embroidered with flowers in bright colours and those for the middle aged and older embroidered with flowers in plain colours. Most Uygur women wear rings, earrings and bracelets. They also dye their eyebrows black and link them up. Unmarried girls usually wear their hair in numerous tiny braids. The longer the braids the more beautiful they are regarded. When they get married, the braids are usually made into two big plaits, with the end part left loose. Some coil their hair on top of the head. Males always carry short knives with them, to ward off wild animals and cut melons and fruit.

The Uygurs are a polite, hospitable and formal people. When they meet friends or elderly persons on the street, they always put their right hands on their chest and bow, repeating, "Se la me li za mu (How do you do)." Whenever a guest visits, the whole family will turn out to

greet him or her, with the hostess pouring tea and presenting melon and fruit. When meeting an elderly person, they touch their own faces with both hands (expressing their wish for the old person to enjoy a long life). All Uygur boys undergo circumcision when they reach seven. Considered a happy event, the boy's family is expected to host a big gathering to celebrate it.

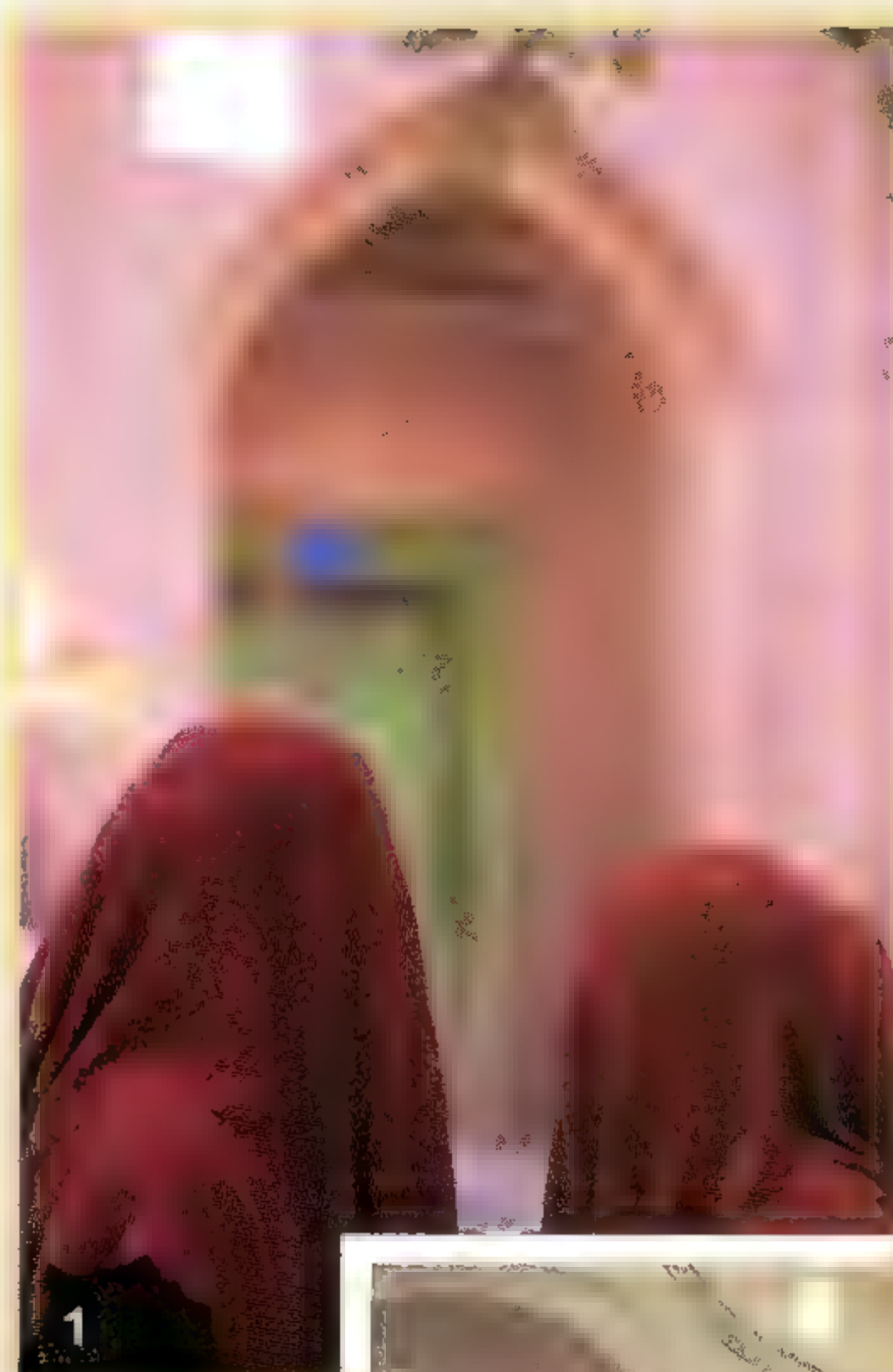
### The Kashi Bazaar

The Kashi Bazaar is very crowded, particularly so on Thursdays. Very early in the morning, Uygurs in surrounding villages will rush to the bazaar either on donkeys or horse-drawn carts. Sold in the bazaar are fine silks, instantly cooked kabobs,

golden nang.... All around, we heard hawking from the peddlers. What appealed to us most were the great variety of melons and fruits, such as peaches, apricots, grapes and figs, as well as huge watermelons with red pulp and black seeds that tasted very sweet, and the refreshing Hami melons, with ink black skins and a fine, orange pulp. Old Uygurs selling

melons stroked their long beards with a smile, enjoying the sight of us eating with such relish.

We commented that occasionally Hami melons were on sale in the markets of Hong Kong. However, they never tasted as good. Our Xinjiang hosts told us that this was to be expected because the melons sold in Hong Kong were picked long before they had ripened, to allow for shipping. They suggested we never compare the melons sold in Hong Kong with those bought in Kashi. We also noticed that the Uygurs were very skilful at cutting the melons up. Placing a melon weighing over five kilograms on the forearm, a man would cut them into thin, neat pieces to expose the tender pulp. Even more surprising was the low price — a huge melon cost only two yuan.



1



1. Women retain the tradition of covering the head with a big shawl when they go out.
2. The Tomb of Fragrant Imperial Concubine in the suburbs of Kashi is known the Apak Hoja Tomb.
3. Two senior Uygur men greeting each other politely when they meet on the street.
4. The ceiling of the mosque is painted with pattern of flowers but no description of animals.
5. The head imam of the Id Kah Mosque leading the reciting of the Koran at the service.



2





known locally as the "Apak Hoja Tomb", is a cultural relic protected by the government of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. Entering the compound through the gate tower and continuing towards the pointed-roofed pagoda, we saw a huge hemispherical dome in the middle of the mazar (graveyard). Buried in the dome were 72 people from five generations (there are 58 tombs there today) of the Hoja family.

The first person buried in the tomb was Yusuf, father of Apak Hoja. Yusuf's grandfather was a famous Muslim missionary in Central Asia in the 17th century. Under his grandfather's influence, Yusuf became a renowned missionary himself and ventured into the Turpan and Hami areas in east Xinjiang to preach Islam. Since many people in the locality still believed in Buddhism at that time, Yusuf's efforts met with resistance. Later, Yusuf married a young woman from the royal family of Kashigar and came to live in Kashi. Shortly after he settled there, a local tribal chieftain called Yar Mamat converted to Islam and donated his entire manor and property to Yusuf for his missionary work. Thus Yusuf built Kashi's first mosque on a wheat drying ground received from Mamat.

From a very young age, Apak Hoja often followed his father on his missionary rounds. In 1633, Yusuf moved to Yarkant, handing over the leadership of the church in Kashi to Apak, who was then only 12 years old. In 1640, Yusuf died in Toblok. Apak took over his father's role, travelling extensively to Kashmir, Tibet and Gansu to preach the Koran and preach Islam. As he himself strictly followed the teachings of the Koran, he came to be regarded as a sage by the local Muslims in Kashi and won a reputation even higher than that of his father. This explains why the family cemetery was known as the "Apak Hoja Tomb".

According to legend, Xiangfei, or the Fragrant Imperial Concubine, belonged to the fifth generation of the family. Perhaps because of her position in the imperial court, tourists from inland areas of China usually refer to the tomb as the "Tomb of the Fragrant Imperial Concubine". Whether or not this is true, no one knows for sure. In the Qing Dynasty, Emperor Qianlong indeed took a Uygur girl called Yiparhan from Xinjiang as one of his imperial concubines. As her body emitted the delicate fragrance of a flower, she received the title Xiangfei.

In the hearts of the local people, the Apak Hoja Tomb is a sacred

place. Many Muslims come to pay homage to it, with the hope that touching the glazed bricks of the building and reciting a few lines from the Koran will help rid them of their ill fortune.

### Uygur Scenes in Old Kashi

We went on a tour of the Old City of Kashi at noon. The sun was scorching, the atmosphere embracing us with waves of hot air and white floating dust. There is very little rain or snow in Kashi. With the longer days and shorter nights, the temperature can vary widely. To ward off the cold at night and the heat in the day, all the houses have thick walls, small windows and flat roofs, characterised by dim interior lighting and monotonous architectural styles. The gateways to the interior of the buildings are very narrow. Inside the exceptionally clean courtyards surrounded by short whitewashed clay walls are mulberry trees, grapevines and a variety of flowers. Most of the houses have corridors supported by pillars at the front. Both ends of the pillars are carved and painted with pomegranate and almond flowers, two major plants in the locality. There are landscapes too, but no image of any animal. The most frequently employed colours are blue and green, generating a cool and bright atmosphere.

In the Old City of Kashi, twisting small lanes lined with white clay walls meander under the green shade of trees. The sound of horse hoofs can be heard now and then when carts pull up along the lanes. Their drivers are mostly old men with elegant white beards, resembling the popular image of Santa Claus. Four thin rods are fixed at the corners of the cart to support a tent-like canopy made of colourful cloth. You can wave a cart to stop anywhere and at any time, just like taking a taxi in other cities.

As the carts trot through the streets day in and day out, the horseshoes are worn out sooner here than in other places. Hence the





## Tips for the Traveller

### Transport

It is suggested that you fly to Ürümqi first. The flight from Ürümqi to Kashi takes about 90 minutes. One-way ticket: 980 yuan; Departure time: 22:30.

**Warning:** As air tickets are hard to get, you need to book your flight two or three days in advance. To make the booking through a travel agency, the charge is 50 yuan per ticket.

**CAAC Booking Office:** Add: 95 Jiefang Road South; Tel: (998) 282 2113 Opening hours: 9:30-13:30, 16:00-20:00 (summer)  
10:00-14:00, 15:30-19:30 (winter)

**Railway Booking Office:** Add: Kashi Railway Station (7 km from the city centre); Tel: (998) 282 1475

**Kashi Long-distance Bus Station:** Add: 51 Tianshan Road South; Tel: (998) 282 4629 Opening hours: 8:00-22:00

**Tourist Bus Company:** Add: Seman Road; Tel: (998) 282 2103

**Car Rental:** Add: 154 Tianshan Road; Tel: (998) 712 2524

#### Long-distance Buses from Kashi to Other Places in Xinjiang

Destination	Distance (km)	Time (hours)	Ticket Price (yuan)	Departure Time
Ürümqi	1,474	36	Sleeper bus: 202; Luxury bus: 140; Ordinary bus: 101	14 buses 9:00-19:30 daily
Hotan	520	12	Sleeper bus: 79; Luxury bus: 50.1; Ordinary bus: 36.20	4 buses 9:00-19:30 daily
Turpan	1,390	34	Sleeper bus: 160-170; Luxury bus: 135; Ordinary bus: 110	—
Korla	1,004	26	Sleeper bus: 135-145; Luxury bus: 97; Ordinary bus: 70	6 buses 9:00-19:30 daily
Taxkorgan	294	6	Sleeper bus: 44.6; Luxury bus: 31.9; Ordinary bus: 22.90	9:00 a.m.
Bachu	265	5	Sleeper bus: 40.3; Luxury bus: 26.5; Ordinary bus: 18.50	—
Yining	1,256	—	Ordinary bus: 130	2 buses 9:00, 19:30 daily
Kuqa	723	—	Sleeper bus: 115; Ordinary bus: 57	4 buses 9:00-19:30 daily
Aksu	462	8	Sleeper bus: 65-75; Ordinary bus: 43	4 buses 9:00-19:00 daily









I felt reluctant to leave Kashi when the time came. As our car entered the area of Hotan, all we could see on the road ahead was the infinite stretch of the vast desert. Occasionally, we came across a river, invariably without water, yet still managing to maintain some small oases along its route. A few low huts amidst the thickets of the oases showed signs of life, disrupting the desolation and loneliness pervading the land.



When we entered the downtown area of the city, we saw hardly any people in the streets or the local stores. At a street corner, we came across an elderly man. I just had to ask, "Grandpa, why is Hotan so deserted?" He looked up and spoke through several big gaps in his teeth. "Some have gone to harness the flood. Others have gone to search for jade." "How come there's a flood in the desert?" I asked in amazement. Realising that I was not a local and a simple answer was not going to suffice, he replied, "Which department are you looking for? The government offices are all over there. There are bound to be people on duty," and with that he turned away.

Hotan is an oasis formed by the Karakax River and the Yurungkax River at the foot of the Kunlun Mountains. The Yurungkax River, originating in the Muztag Mountain, and the Karakax River, also from the Kunlun Mountains, converge at Hotan to form the Hotan River. From there it flows through

Xiaoda and joins the Tarim River, covering a distance of 2,100 km, cutting through the desert and nurturing oases along the way. The Tarim River never reaches the sea — it dries up in the wilderness of Lop Nur.

### Three Sources of Hotan Jade

The Yurungkax River is well known for its white jade, the Karakax River for its black jade. When the snow on the Kunlun melts in July and August, there is a short rainy season, which causes the water in the rivers to flow in spates. Since there is no vegetation in the desert, the flood surges in unimpeded, coming and going at enormous speed. When the flood rushes down the mountains, it flushes the earth and sand down with it, as well as quantities of jade. During this season, many people go to harness the flood for irrigation and others take this opportunity to hunt for jade.

Hotan is the world's largest soft jade producer. It has a long history of jade production. In the 1950s, a large quantity of Hotan jade







### Hotels in Kashi

Hotel	Address	Telephone (area code: 998)	Telephone (area code: 998)	Rate (yuan)
Seman Hotel **	337 Seman Road	282 2060	282 2861	15/bed in a large room; 280-320/double room
Qiniwak Hotel **	144 Seman Road	284 2299	282 3842	30/bed in a room for three; 20/bed in a room for four; 160-220/double room
Kashigar Hotel **	57 Ta'uguzi Road	261 4954	261 4679	180-240/room for three; 250/double room
Huaqiao (Overseas Chinese) Hotel	376 Seman Road	283 3262	282 2459	120-300/double room; 120/room for three

### Major Islamic Festivals in 2001

**Id al-Kurban (Corban):** March 6 (December 10, Moslem calendar)

**Maulid al-Nabi:** June 4 (March 12, Moslem calendar)

**Start of Ramadan:** November 17 (September 1, Moslem calendar)

**Islamic New Year:** March 26 (1422 on Moslem calendar)

**Mi'radj Festival:** October 14 (July 27, Moslem calendar)

**Lailah al-Qadr:** December 12 (September 27, Moslem calendar)

**al-'Ashura (Ashula Day):** April 4 (January 10, Moslem calendar)

**Lailah al-Barat:** November 1 (night of August 15, Moslem calendar)

**'Id al-Fitr (Lesser Bairam):** December 17 (October 1, Moslem calendar)



1. The Apak Hoja Tomb where 72 people of five generations of the family are buried.
2. The Ustanboy Teahouse is where tourists like to drop in for a break.
3. Silk sells well at the big bazaar.
4. A hat is a favourite souvenir.
5. Chopped ice with juice and honey added makes a good snack in summer.
6. Rice noodles sold on the market.
7. Horse carts serve as taxis in Kashi.





Aidis silk produced in Hotan is unique in design. It is dyed by a special method: the material is dipped into dyes made of minerals and plants, with the fabric's warp threads tied up with corn leaves. The silk fabric is 40 cm in width. Its designs are mostly long stripes, diamond patterns and other geometrical figures. Its main colours are black, red, yellow, and multi-coloured blends.





was discovered near Lop Nur and identified as the lost items being transported to the Central Plains some 6,000 years earlier. In 1931, a green jade plate from 3,500 years before was unearthed in the Yin Ruins of Xiaotun Village in Henan. It was determined that it had been carved out of a piece of Hotan jade. When the tomb of Liu Sheng, King of Zhongshan of the Western Han dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 24), and his wife was excavated, it contained a suit made of 2,498 pieces of jade linked together with gold threads. This was also identified as Hotan jade.

There are three basic sources of Hotan jade: you can search for it in the river, quarry for it in the mountains or dig for it in the desert. For quarrying, people usually go to the Qijia Mine in the Kunlun Mountains. However, the route is treacherous. It takes five days to get there, riding a donkey for three days to reach Liushui Village, then continuing on foot for another two days to reach the mine. The Qijia Mine, a huge 50-metre deep pit, has been in operation for over a century. The jade quarried in this way is called "mountain material", which is not as good as that found in the rivers. Since access to the mine is so difficult, too, the mining of jade here is rather erratic.

To find jade in the river is similar to shell-hunting after the tide has receded at a beach. Along the Yurungkax River, many people wade through the water with their trouser-legs rolled up high. Since the water flows swiftly and it is not easy to walk on the pebbles, most people use a wooden pole for support. Heads bent, they move forward cautiously and scan the riverbed with their eyes. Although it is not easy to actually find any jade, fortune occasionally smiles upon someone. In July 1980, two herdsmen from Hotan found a piece of white jade weighing 590 kilograms on the upper reaches of the Yurungkax River. In the autumn of 1990, a farmer found a piece of quality white jade as heavy as 50 kilograms.

The best-known Hotan jade is white jade, which comes in many different varieties. The most precious of these, and most difficult to find, is Yangzhi (Sheep Fat) white jade. Apart from the shape and size, one important criterion is its very smooth and delicate appearance. It looks so fragile that you dare not touch it. In fact, it is hard and glossy. Near the Hotan Bridge there is a jade market. Peddlers don't occupy a stand but wander around, showing samples of jade. Although I



1. A mill using water as power to grind the grain.
2. The technique of silkworm cultivation was brought to Hotan from the Central Plains in the Eastern Han Dynasty.
3. The traditional method is still used today in silk production.
4. A lovely Uyghur girl.

lingered in the market for quite a while, I did not see one example of Yangzhi white jade, and even if there were one, I would never be able to afford it.

### Aidis Silk and Islamic Motifs

We left Hotan at dusk. After driving 10 km, we came to Jiya Town in Lop County, known as the home of Aidis silk. The first thing that came into view was a row of tall poplar trees and a swiftly flowing canal. The big and straight trees stood side by side along the streets. Behind the trees were residences with whitewashed enclosure walls. Kitchen smoke rose up from some of the smooth, flat roofs. At the entrance of one residence, several Uyghur women in Aidis silk dresses

stood chatting. The sound of a silk loom in action wafted out from inside.

Following the sound, we entered a little courtyard. The 45-year old hostess,

Minawal, sat with her legs folded on an adobe bed, swiftly plucking silk threads from a boiling cauldron and tying them to a spinning wheel. Gradually the white cocoons revealed the light brown silkworm chrysalis. Minawal's daughter sat at a silk weaving loom, busy weaving with both hands and feet.

Before the 2nd century, the people in the Western Region were unable to produce silk. All of the silk transported via the Western Region to mid-Asia, Europe and Northern Africa came from the Central Plains. During the late Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220), a princess was married to the King of Yudian (present-day Hotan). The King told his envoy, who was going to fetch the princess, to ask her to bring some mulberry seeds and silkworms' eggs so that one day silk would be produced in his kingdom. Then his people would be able to wear silk too. Silk production was on a par with the high-tech industries of today, so it was under strict control. The princess hid the seeds and eggs in her hat. At the pass, the procession led by the envoy was thoroughly searched. However, they dared not touch the hat of the princess. In this way, the mulberry and the silkworm were brought to Yudian. This story is recorded in the *Western Region of the Great Tang*. In 1914, a mural describing the story found in an abandoned



ancient temple in Dandanulike of Qira County provided more evidence of this historical episode.

By the 10th century, the industry of silk production was already well developed in Hotan. In the year of 961, shortly after Emperor Taizu assumed the throne, King Li Shengtian of Yudian sent envoys to the Song court to present tributes. They also took with them some satin and brocade to do some bartering in the Central Plains. Unexpectedly, their silk products were extremely popular. Later on, the people in Hotan began to follow Islam, so the light, flowing Aidis silk was printed with the cultural motifs of Islam. The width of a piece of silk was 40 cm. According to the requirements of the pattern, weavers wrapped up warp threads with corn leaves and dipped them in a dye made of minerals and plants. Silk threads made this way had a shade which turned from light to deep depending upon the angle from which the light fell upon it. The patterns were mostly longish, with serried dual squares or patterns of three overlapping squares in a row. In terms of colour, there were black, red, yellow and multi-coloured. The black satin has the longest history and has always been suitable for elderly women. The red satin, bright and filled with youth and vitality, is very popular with young girls. The yellow satin looks graceful and dignified, most suitable for middle-aged women. The multi-coloured satin shows a sense of liveliness and is the most suitable material for skirts.

In recent years, Aidis silk has also been produced by machinery, but it is unable to match the handmade fabric in respect of appearance, texture and softness.

### Hotan Carpet: Tribute to Qing Emperors

A fragment of carpet was unearthed in an ancient city named Niya (today's Minfeng) in 1959. A textual study on it showed that it had been produced in the Eastern Han Dynasty. What is amazing is that its colour and pattern are so similar to that of present-day Hotan carpets. Rug fragments unearthed from a Han-dynasty tomb in Lop were also identified as Hotan carpets. The weaving density of the warp and weft is about 330, almost the same as today. During the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), Hotan carpets were used as tributes to the imperial court. Some rare works, such as "Pomegranate Blossoms", are exhibited in the Palace Museum in Beijing.

The patterns of Hotan carpets are mostly based on exaggerated images of plants, flowers and fruit, all characteristic of the Uygur people. Dyes used for Hotan carpets

are made of plants and minerals. The formula for such dyes is simple and limited in the number of colours. However, they are bright and elegant, glossy but soft-looking, and long-lasting. They sell well on European and American markets.

What has contributed most to Hotan carpet's reputation is the high quality materials and meticulous weaving methods used. The wool from Hotan sheep is even in thickness, glossy and crease-resistant. Carpets made with this particular wool are soft, elastic, damp-proof and anticorrosive. After years of use, the sheen still remains. The warp and weft threads are made of quality cotton from Xinjiang. Elastic and resilient, they will never break.

Hotan carpets can be found in the Great Hall of the People, Huaren Hall in Zhongnanhai and the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing. In 1988, at the invitation of the British government, the Hotan Carpet Factory sent designers and weavers to London to perform a demonstration. When Macao returned back to China on December 20, 1999, the gift given by the government of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region to the government of the Special Administrative Region of Macao was a large tapestry produced in Hotan.



1. Among the varieties of white jade produced in Hotan, the Yangzhi jade is the best.



2. Hotan carpets reflect the deep influence of the Muslim culture.

3. A lucky woman has just picked up a piece of jade from the Yurungkax River.

4. After a flood, many people rush to the river in the hope of finding some jade stones.

5. Hotan carpets are famous for their good quality and characteristic designs.











A long-distance bus, draped in a thick layer of dust except for the two patches cleared by the front windscreen wipers, pulled up steadily at a point on a monotonous road in the desert. The door opened and let out an elderly man with a full silvery beard. Headed by this man, a team of Muslims filed towards the roadside. Heading west (towards Mecca), they stood in formation and, each spreading out a carpet on the ground, bowed, kowtowed, sat on their heels and prayed.... This reminded me of a scene I had once witnessed while in transit at Dubai International Airport. A policeman entered a cleaning room, came out after a minute and walked over to a corner facing west. There he sat on his heels and prayed.... I was intrigued at the time. Later on I learned that a Muslim would carry out this ritual five times a day, before sunrise, at noon, before sunset, at sunset and after dark. Every Friday, there is a congregational service. During major religious festivals, there are grand ceremonies and they also pray at night during the month of Ramadan.

After the prayer, the old man walked back to the bus with the help of a young man. I stepped forward and asked, "Excuse me, sir, I suppose you must be an imam?" The benevolent-looking man shook his head gently, his eyes showing a little bit of shyness. The young man beside him said, "He is a hajj." Hajj is a respectable title for a Muslim who has been to Mecca as a pilgrim. According to Islamic

teaching, every healthy Muslim, as long as he or she can afford the expense, must go to Mecca as a pilgrim at least once in his or her life. There they attend a series of ceremonies, including paying their respects to the tomb of Muhammad, camping, and throwing pebbles at Satan.

## Floral Caps of Yutian

When our car entered Yutian, we saw many Uygur women wearing white silk scarves on their heads, topped with little floral caps. The cap, locally called *anlibaike*, was quite different from that worn in other parts of Xinjiang. There are two types of Uygur *tanlibaike*. One is made of four pieces of leaf-shaped cloth with various designs embroidered with golden or silvery silk threads. The ends of each piece are sewn together to make a cap, which is then placed onto a wooden mould to be pressed. Finally an edge of black velvet is stitched on. Another type is a soft cap woven with white silk threads, easy to wash and carry. The cap Yutian women wear is quite small and pretty, with a diameter less than 10 cm. It is made with colourful satin edged





## Tips for the Traveller

Hotan is located in southern Xinjiang, its ancient Tibetan name, Yudian, means "a place where jade is produced". Hotan has an area of 247,800 square kilometres, sloping from south towards north. To its south is the Kunlun Mountains while its north extends well into the Taklimakan Desert. The climate is dry, hot in summer and cold in winter. Rain is rare all year round. The best tourist season is from June to October.

### Transport

Flights and long-distance bus services are available in Hotan. There are regular flights to Ürümqi, Aksu and other cities, and long-distance buses going to Ürümqi, Kashi, Minfeng and Yecheng.

**Civil Aviation Ticket Office:** Add: 3 Ürümqi Road; Tel: (903) 202 2178

**Hotan Bus Terminal:** Add: 5 Hemo Road; Tel: (903) 202 2487

### Buses from Hotan to Other Places in Xinjiang

Name	Distance (km)	Fare (yuan)	Departure Time
Ürümqi	1,994	138 (seat)	9:30-20:00, 5 buses
Kuqa	1,230	86 (seat), 148-168 (sleeper)	9:30, 14:00, 19:00
Kashi	520	50	9:30, 19:30
Shache (Yarkant)	317	31 (seat)	10:30, 19:30
Qiemo (Qarqan)	603	46 (seat)	9:30
Minfeng	294	21 (seat)	9:30

### Hotels in Hotan

Name	Add	Tel (area code: 0903)	Fax (area code: 0903)	Rate (yuan) (double room)
Hotan Hotel **	10 Bositan Road South	202 3566	202 3570	From 240
Hotan Guesthouse	4 Tanaiyi Road North	202 2824	—	49-90
Hotan City Hotel	11 Nuerbage Road West	202 6101	202 6101	40

### Places of Interest

#### A Land of Orchards

The dry climate with little rainfall, long hours of sunshine and great variance in temperature, plus ample water for irrigation are highly beneficial to orchard farming. The cultivation of fruit trees here has a long history. The renowned King Walnut Tree, the King Fig Tree and the King Grape Vine are the finest examples.

#### The King Walnut Tree

The 400-year-old King Walnut Tree is located in Kelawaqi Village of Bageqi Township, Hotan County. Its massive trunk is so thick that it takes four people with arms outstretched to reach around its circumference. Its thick foliage in the shape of a huge umbrella offers shade to several hundred people at once. Since its branches can hardly bear the weight of the heavy walnuts, poles have to be used to prop them up. It is able to

produce 5,000 to 6,000 walnuts every year.

#### The King Fig Tree

Also 400 years old, it is located in the back yard of the government office of Layike Township in Hotan County. Though aged, the tree produces 14,000 to 15,000 figs every year. New branches keep sprouting from year to year, forming a thick and healthy foliage. Its crown covers a space of 0.07 hectares. Before winter comes, the poles used to support the branches have to be removed in order to lower the branches to the ground. Then the whole tree is covered with grape vines, corn stalks and finally a layer of earth to protect it from the bitter cold. In Spring, it is uncovered and propped up once again. On each occasion it requires 15 young men to work for a whole week to complete the task.

#### The King Grape Vine

A grape vine as thick as a cup is quite rare. But this King Grape Vine in Wusitanwuqi Village of Hanggui Township in Lop County is as thick as a barrel. There is no sign of green leaves beneath the main trunk, but it has grown countless new branches above it, all laden with grapes of the "horse nipple" variety. According to forestry experts, it has been in existence for more than 150 years and must have been handed down from the Qing Dynasty.







that I began to doze. "Let me tell you a joke," Ma said, perhaps to cheer up the atmosphere and ease my embarrassment. His joke was somewhat pornographic, which soon dispelled all our drowsiness.

Occasionally we saw one or two eateries along the way. They are

1. Muslims keep praying five times a day even when they are on a journey.
2. When they are ripe, these gourds will become useful water containers or ladles.
3. Women in Yutian wear small caps as a decoration.
4. After the prayer, the Muslim passengers return to their bus.



nothing more than simple huts, so primitive that the owners did not even put up signboards. At the door, there is usually a streamer with the word "Wine" on it. Most of the eateries are husband and wife shops, the woman serving the customers in front while the husband cooks in a back room. Their customers are mainly truck drivers and passengers travelling on the long-distance buses. It can't be easy to run a restaurant in the desert like that. It is like being situated on an isolated islet, with everything having to be supplied from afar. Water is the greatest asset, but it would be too expensive for the shop owners to obtain their own water, so they ask the drivers to bring them water in exchange for a free meal.

At noon, we came to the heart of the desert, where we caught sight of several towering oil rigs, some vans with wide wheels and a row of low huts. We were rather excited as we approached the site. A board hung on the wall of a hut read, "Tazhong Desert Postal Station Hostel". So this was actually an inn deep in the desert. The manager, Zeng Zhanliang, showed us around. The clean rooms were furnished with television sets and air-conditioners. When he turned on the tap in the toilet, hot water poured out. He told us that what they had was oil and electricity and what they lacked was water. "However," he said, "we have trucks to deliver water to us. So water is not a problem any

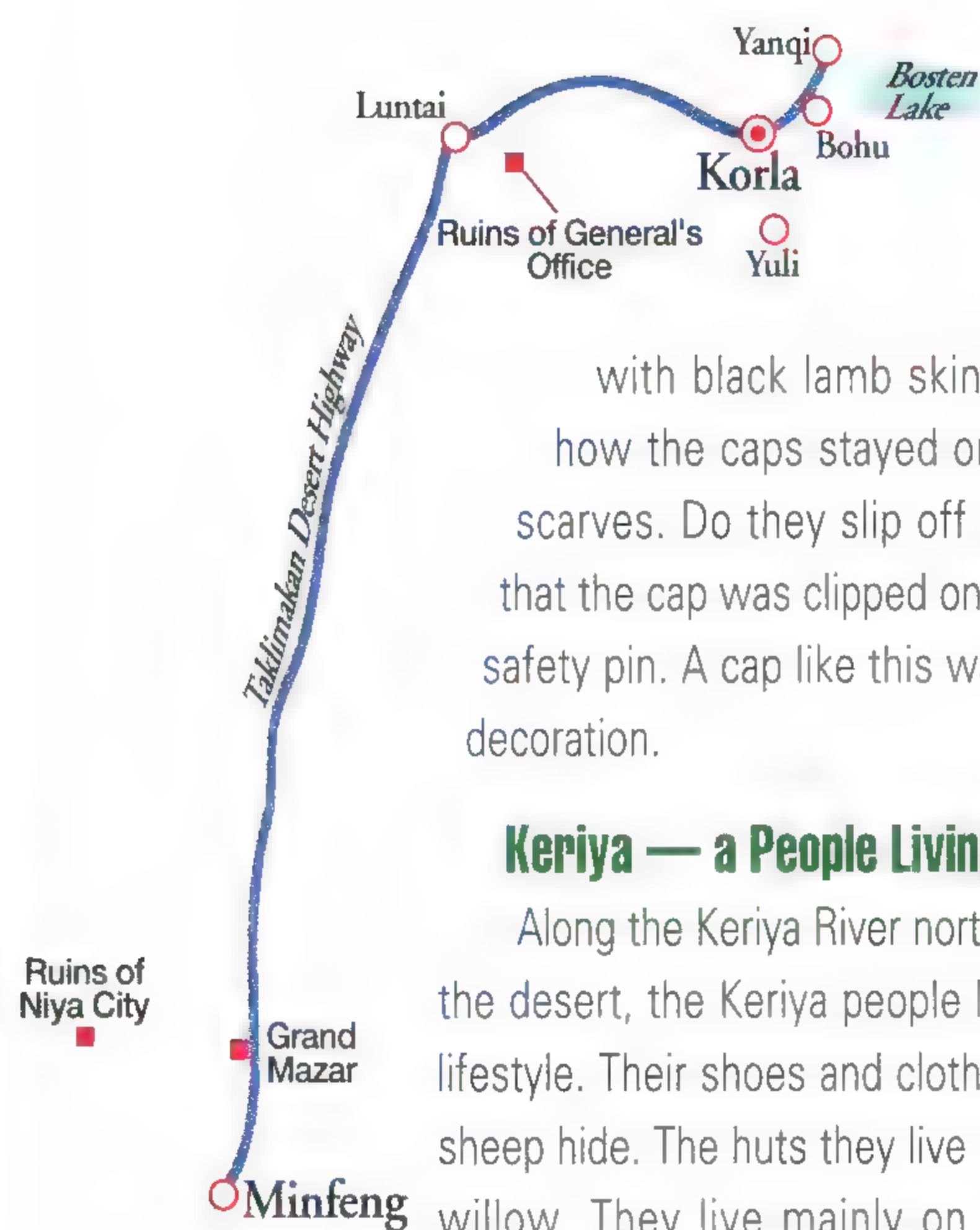


the desert, so he was the most experienced among us. He even knew how to catch wild rabbits. Instead of a rifle, he used a trap. He would first find the route a rabbit had passed, bury the trap under the ground and spread some sand over it. Then using the rabbit paws, he would make some prints above the trap. A rabbit would always return following the same route it had gone out and would be easily caught.

The road extends according to the terrain. After scores of kilometres driving in a sea of sand, it felt as if we were riding on a wavy sea. At first, it was great fun to watch the changing terrain, but after a while I became bored and drowsy from the monotony. The road was very straight and we rarely encountered any vehicles. Ma vehemently pressed the pedal and our car raced at what felt like a very high speed. The speedometer indicated that we were doing 110-120 km per hour. It was stimulating but risky. So I said to Ma, "Slow down, please. Safety comes first." He replied harshly, "Do you think we can get to Korla today if I slow down?" I was rather embarrassed. I was so sleepy







with black lamb skin. But I wondered how the caps stayed on the slippery silk scarves. Do they slip off easily? I was told that the cap was clipped onto the scarf with a safety pin. A cap like this was there solely for decoration.

### Keriya — a People Living in Seclusion

Along the Keriya River northward and deep in the desert, the Keriya people live their secluded lifestyle. Their shoes and clothes are all made of sheep hide. The huts they live in are laid with red willow. They live mainly on hunting. What is surprising is that they do not use a stove to bake nang, but burn sand on the ground and then bake the nang right on the sand. The size of the nang is adapted to the size of the group. The Keriya people occasionally go to places like Yutian to barter their prayers for clothes and food. For centuries, no one had paid any attention to them; in fact it was not until the late 20th century that they were noticed at all. No one knows how long they have lived there. A visit to a Keriya settlement would be a fresh experience. Unfortunately, our stay in Yutian was too short for such a trip.

Minfeng is located on the southern edge of the Taklimakan Desert. This explains why it has been left far behind in modern life. The people in Minfeng are honest and kind-hearted. Their simple and primitive dwellings are all built by themselves or folk architects. Building materials mainly include timber, reeds and mud. A house is

usually built on high ground. After the foundation is laid, a carpenter would erect the frame, reinforced with poles, small

rafters or red willow branches. Finally, mud mixed with straw is used to make the walls. For the roof, reed mats are used to cover its small rafters, which are then weighted down by dry earth. Rain or snow is very rare here, the annual rainfall being less than 40 mm, so the problem of leaking roofs never arises.

### Niya Ruins, Where an Oasis Used to Exist

The Niya River, originating from the Kunlun Mountains, once flowed into the area where the Niya ruins lie. At that time, the people of the Jingjue Kingdom during the period of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220) lived on the oasis created by this river. Due to a change in the river's course, the Niya civilisation died out. Today, even the ruins have almost vanished in the desert, and the oasis has moved some 140 km away. Obviously, the most important reason for the abandonment of the site was the southward shift of the desert and the cessation of its water resources.

The Niya Ruins are 22.5 km from south to north and 6.4 km from west to east. Jingjue was one of the 36 kingdoms in the Western Region. According to the *History of Han: Records of the Western Region*, Niya had been a city state on the southern route of the Silk Road. The Niya Ruins include an ancient city, offices, Buddhist pagoda, temple, fields, plantations, blacksmith's workshops and kilns. In the centre of the ruins there once stood a huge Buddhist pagoda, indicating the special position of Buddhism in Niya. Traces of South Asian Buddhist architecture can be found in the designs of some of the structures. Quite a number of broken inscribed woodslips from the Han Dynasty were unearthed. One of them bears a year record of the Western Dynasty. Archeologists decided that the Niya ruins are from the 3rd century.

### A Road Built on the Taklimakan Desert

Minfeng is situated at the south end of the Taklimakan Desert Highway, which runs 523 km across the desert to Luntai in the north. Before we set off driving along the highway, we had bought melons, fruit and food. Ma Tao filled the fuel tank, then kicked the tyres to check for loose screws. He said that to drive in the desert, he had to let out half the air in the tyres in order to increase the traction. This way the wheels would not get out of control, nor become bogged down in the sand. Ma Tao had once served in the army stationed in

1. There are many small bazaars, or rural markets, in southern Xinjiang, most of them opening once a week.
2. The sheep provides food to the Uygurs and is also the main source of their income.
3. A thrilling overloaded tractor is commonplace in this area.
4. The local people use a primitive method to make paper using mulberry bark.







1. The *Kantuman* is a useful tool for the Xinjiang farmers.
2. Bosten Lake's barbecue fish is delicious.
3. A household of fishermen living by the lake.
4. The highway that runs through the Taklimakan Desert.
5. This Uygur family runs a restaurant in the desert.
6. In some areas, a white layer of salt covers the ground.
7. The reservoir built upstream from the Iron Gate Pass in Korla is also open to tourists.
8. An oil drilling base in the desert.
9. The donkey-drawn cart is an indispensable means of transport in the vast desert.
10. The Japanese young man who is travelling on the Silk Road by bike.

which the limpid Kongque (Phoenix) River rushes through the ravine for more than 10 km. Walking on the plank road built on the cliff face, we crossed our arms around ourselves to ward off the chill wind. Walking a bit further into the gully, we came to a hydroelectric station, where clusters of

residential buildings have been built. When I talked to the residents, I was surprised to find they spoke pure Shanghai dialect. They migrated here from Shanghai in the 1960s, when there was a drive to send youngsters to the Western Region to take part in the construction there.

Bosten Lake is located in the Yanqi Basin. Covering 1,228 square kilometres, it is one of the largest freshwater lakes in China. The Kaidu River ends here, where the Phoenix River begins. Bosten Lake is teeming with different species of fish, including carps, crucian carp, big-headed fish and blunt-snouted bream. In recent years, a recreational centre known as Golden Beach Resort has been built. On the broad golden beach, there stood many large colourful umbrellas. The water was beautifully clean and reminded me of the sea. In summer, the



more."

We had to say goodbye to the manager. He said regretfully, "It is not easy to drive through the desert. Actually dawn and dusk here are very beautiful. Wouldn't you like to stay here for the night to see it for yourselves?" He had a point. The most important thing for a tourist is the experiences he or she may have. A night in the desert would be wonderful in its own right, let alone seeing the sunrise or sunset. To watch the stars at night, to listen to the desert wind, to experience what Zhang Qian of the Western Han, Xuan Zang of the Tang Dynasty, Marco Polo of Italy and countless silk merchants on the Silk Road had once experienced would be enchanting. In those days, they would never know what would appear or happen the next day, so it was impossible for them to plan a time schedule. They had to let life drift on of its own accord. As a result, the journey became romantic and full of surprises. But when we set off, we had to make a strict itinerary; even the return air ticket had been confirmed. It was like a watch, with every

gear so precise, so accurate. According to our plan, we had to cover 700 km a day. We had to rush things and had no real time to enjoy the landscape, let alone be romantic. I replied repeatedly, "Next time, next time when we come, we will definitely stay here." As soon as the words were out, I realised how hypocritical they must have sounded. Yet the manager handed over his business card politely. The address on the card aroused my interest: 293-kilometre Point on the Desert Road, the Taklimakan Desert, Xinjiang. We turned our eyes to the road and saw the sign saying "293 Kilometres".

### **A Key Pass on the Ancient Silk Road**

We reached Korla by the evening and decided to see the Iron Gate Pass. The pass was wedged between the Hala and Kuluke Mountains, 8 km north of the city proper of Korla. It was an unavoidable pass on the Silk Road when crossing the Tianshan Mountains; a strategic point in ancient times. The Iron Gate Pass is built on a cliff, at the foot of





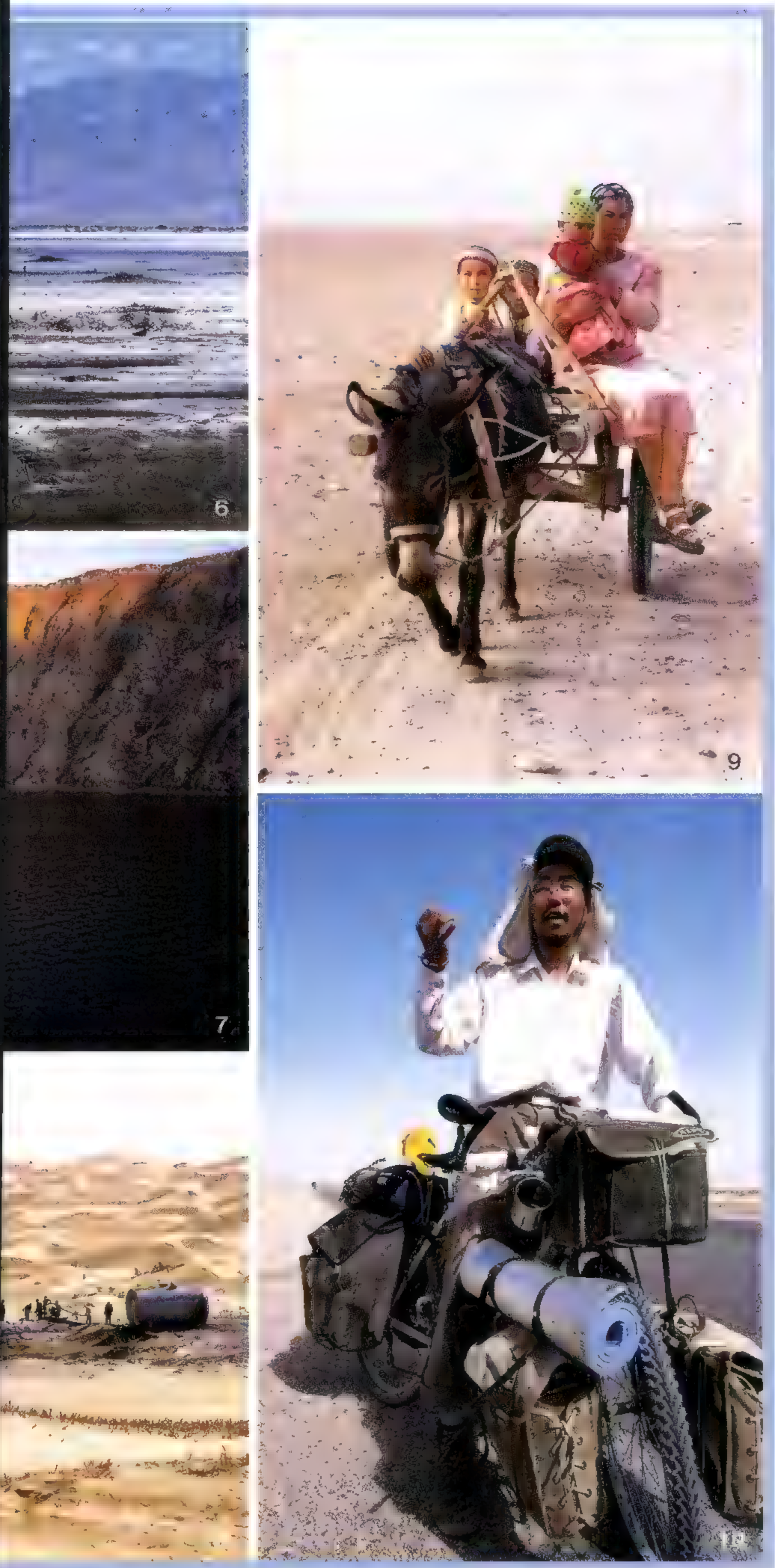
NEW SPOT





At the time when this story is published, I guess he is in the final stages of fulfilling his mammoth dream. I wish him all the best and a safe journey home.

Translated by Z. G. Li, M. J. Wang



people of Ürümqi, who live farthest from sea, come here to relax with swimming, barbecues, and other recreational activities.

On our way to Ürümqi along State Highway 314, we met a young Japanese man riding a bicycle. He was suntanned and wore spectacles. From our conversation, we learned that he was 24 and a programmer in an IT company in Tokyo. Ever since he had been an undergraduate, he had longed to see the Silk Road. Then last July, when he finally had enough money, he took a bicycle and camping facilities and flew from Tokyo to Xi'an, where he boarded a train bound for Jiayuguan. From there he started a 7,000 km trek by bike. When we met him, he had been cycling for one and a half months. He planned to complete the whole route of the Silk Road within a year and a half and then fly back to Japan from Britain.

## Tips for the Traveller

### Transport

Korla is a major city and an important communication hub in southern Xinjiang. It is 470 km from Ürümqi in the north, 440 km to Ruqiang (Qarkilik) in the south, and 281 km to Kuqa. The newly built railway links it with Ürümqi, Xi'an and Kashi. Several highways meet here, which lead to Aksu, Kashi, Ruqiang, Golmud, Yining, Ürümqi and Turpan. Long-distance buses can take the passengers from Korla to many places. There is an airport in Korla, from where one may take flights to Ürümqi or Qiemo.

#### Buses from Korla to Other Places

Name	Distance (km)	Fare (yuan)	Departure Time
Yanqi	54	—	13:00
Hejing	87	—	7:30
Turpan	386	36 (seat), 40-50 (sleeper)	11:30
Ürümqi	470	43 (ordinary bus) 62-72 (luxury bus)	8:00, 9:30, 18:30
Kuqa	281	28 (seat)	8:30-15:00 (hourly)
Nuqiang	444	42 (seat) 70-80 (sleeper)	8:30
Aksu	542	52 (seat) 70-80 (sleeper)	—
Kashi	1004	70 (seat) 135-145 (sleeper)	8:30, 10:30, 11:30, 15:30
Qiemo	1012	130-160 (sleeper)	9:30
Shache	1196	82 (seat)	8:00
Hotan	1512	100 (seat)	8:00
Bayanbulak	363	—	8:00
Yining	640	50 (seat)	8:00

### Hotels in Korla

Name	Add	Tel (area code: 996)	Fax (area code: 996)	Rate (yuan) (double room)
Bayinguleng Hotel ***	Renmin Road East, Korla	202 2248	202 2247	From 220
Loulan Hotel **	Renmin Road East, Korla	202 4588	202 4788	From 180
Bosten Hotel	Renmin Road West, Korla	202 2007	202 4103	From 180

#### Postal Station at the Taklimakan Desert

Add: 293 km Point, Taklimakan Desert Highway (air-conditioned rooms); Tel: (996) 217 7198, 13909960514

**Minfeng Niya Hotel** Add: County Seat of Minfeng; Tel: (903) 675 0034

### Notes

#### 1. How do you get to the Desert Highway?

- (1) Join a tourist group organised by China Travel Service, International Travel Service or China Youth Travel Service in Ürümqi.
- (2) Rent a car, which offers more freedom and comfort; around 800 yuan per day.
- (3) Take a long-distance bus, much cheaper, but limited freedom; usually crowded and bad air.

#### 2. When is the best tourist season?

September and October: fine weather; little wind; mild climate; the multi-form-leaf poplar trees begin to turn yellow, providing an interesting landscape.

#### 3. Precaution:

- (1) Bring adequate drinking water, a water bottle; water is available in shops along the way, but rather expensive due to long-distance transport. If you are not used to the mutton sold in the eateries, take some instant-boiled food with you.
- (2) Take sunblock lotion and lip moisturiser.



surroundings — whitewashed houses under the blue sky and white clouds. From close up, the lighthouse is just as elegant. The exquisite wooden windows, as well as the bronze spiral staircase polished by long years of handling, transport you back to romantic times.

In the last rays of the setting sun, I returned to the hotel. By that time, the sky was already studded with stars. On such a beautiful night, it was luxurious to lie on the soft sandy beach, allowing the sea breeze to gently caress my face and listening to the sound of the waves lapping against the shore, mingling with that of the motor junks in the distance. The light from the lighthouse reminded me of the women of the island waiting at home for the return of their family members day and night....



### • Gouqi Island •

#### *Where Chinese Wolfberry Grow in Abundance*

This island gets its name from the fact that gouqi (fruit of the Chinese wolfberry) grows in abundance here. Walking on the mountain path covered with fishing nets drying in the sun, I sensed more the flavour of a fishery island.

**Mazu Temple** Following the sound of chanting, I came to the Mazu Temple in the southwest of the island. This is a simple and unembellished building which houses a statue of the Sea Goddess, Mazu, the most worshipped idol in the coastal areas of southern China. I was told that at the beginning of every fishing season, local women would come to the temple to burn joss sticks to Mazu to pray for a calm sea and a good harvest of fish. Facing the sea, before an incense burner from which smoke gently curled upward, the pious worshippers revealed their honest hearts.

The sound of a siren in the distance announced that the fishing boats berthed at the harbour were ready to set sail.



**Stone Carvings** On a low hill, some 100 meters from the Mazu Temple, stands a huge stone inscribed with the four Chinese characters, meaning "Wonders of Mountain and Sea". They are calligraphy works written by Admiral Hou Jigao in 1590, when he was stationed in Zhejiang Province and led a patrol to the island. Stopping here to gaze at the blue sky, white clouds and vast expanse of sea, the ancient officer had felt compelled to express his appreciation.

**Golden Sands** Looking down from the slope, you can see dark-green fishing nets extending on the spotlessly white Gouqi Beach, like splashes of ink. Fisherwomen, wearing colourful scarves on their heads, were mending the fishing nets, as if they were playing a fishermen's tune on a

zither. I found myself rushing down to the beach.

Wooden boats, children, dogs, fishing nets and local women constituted a lively scene on the beach. Children were running around, building castles or catching crabs. Fishermen in straw hats floated to the island on rafts... the rhythmical lapping of the waves against the beach accompanied the children's play and the women's work.


Night on Gouqi Island is a fascinating time. Waking up at midnight and looking out of the window, I saw a crescent moon in the star-studded sky, and heard the sound of the sea at night — much clearer and more melodious than in the daytime.

### • Shengshan •

#### *The Central Town of Zhoushan Fishing Ground*

Shengshan is separated from Gouqi Island by a strip of water. It is the site of the main town of the Zhoushan Fishing Ground. The sea here abounds in fish, shrimps and crabs. It happened to be the fishing season when I was there. Fishing boats had gathered at Shengshan from different islands. The blue sea, bustling harbour, hotels and restaurants scattered here and there in the town, pebble paths, green mountains and bustling market presented a picture of prosperity.

**Market** Walking out of the Shengshan dock, I found myself in the market crowded with people and resounding with the cries of the peddlers. I saw fishermen carrying crabs to the market, fresh from the sea, while peddlers sold different kinds of seafood packaged in large and small plastic boxes. At the eastern section of the street, there were many old women selling dried fish. These old ladies had as many different techniques in selling their fish as they had dispositions.

In the night, Shengshan Harbor was ablaze with the lights of the fishing boats, and the lights mingled with the stars in the sky. 

*Translated by Jin Jianzhong*



# THE SHENGSI ISLANDS AND THEIR GLORIOUS SEASCAPES

Photos & article by Yu Qiong

*Shengsi, located in the north of the Zhoushan Islands, includes the islands of Shengsi, Huaniao, Gouqi and Shengshan. It faces Shanghai across a narrow stretch of sea. It has a mild maritime climate, and the surrounding blue sea makes the islands as beautiful as exquisite oil paintings. Jihu and Nanchangtu Beach on Shengsi Island have become summer resorts. However, the vast seascapes are even more attractive on the other smaller islands.*



In order to feast my eyes on the blue sea and try the local seafood, I took a trip to these fascinating islands.

## • Huaniao Island •

### *Bird-shaped and Carpeted with Flowers*

The name of this island means "flowers and birds". It was already lunchtime when I reached the island by boat. There is no flat land there, and the houses are all located on the slopes of the hills. The sight of the houses bathing in the fresh, moist air and glowing in the golden rays of the sun filled my mind with a delicious sense of peace.

**Stone Houses** I found two small stone houses near the pier. In front of each was a courtyard, encircled by short stone walls. These are the traditional houses of the local fishermen, but are rarely seen these days. Five years ago, a bumper maritime harvest benefited almost every household on the island. With the money, the fishermen not only bought bigger fishing boats by pooling their capital, but also built new houses, so their stone houses were generally abandoned.

**Women** I saw only women walking along the main street, the busiest place on the island, albeit no more than 50 metres long. Some were selling fish and crabs caught by their husbands, others were selling vegetables and fruit, and yet others were selling articles for daily use. And the shoppers, walking slowly and selecting the commodities carefully, were also all women. Whenever their

husbands go out deep-sea fishing, their hearts beat with the sailing boats, worrying about the wind and waves and counting the days until their husbands return.

**Lighthouse** Walking northward along the only highway on the island, I came to the Huaniao Lighthouse, one of the four major lighthouses in the Pacific, built in 1870 by the British. Looking into the distance from halfway up a mountain, I found that the brick pillar-like structure painted in black and white blended harmoniously with the

1. Fishing boats at the Shengshan Port, ready to be put to sea.
2. The Huaniao Lighthouse towers majestically against the blue sky and white clouds.
3. You see only women on the island while their men are away at sea fishing.





HIGHLIGHTS



Wangwu Mountain covered in snow.



## Tips for the Traveller

### ◆ Transport

Shengsi can be reached by ship from either Shanghai or Dinghai.

#### Shanghai → Sijiao

1. The ship leaves Shanghai from the Shiliupu Port at 21:00 and arrives at Sijiao, one of the Shengsi islands, at 5:00 the next day. The ship leaves at 14:00 the same day for Shanghai and arrives at 23:00. It sails every day in busy seasons, but will launch two sails for every three days in slow seasons. Costs: 50 yuan/third class; 37 yuan/fourth class; 24 yuan/seat.

2. From Luchao Port in Nanhui County of Shanghai, the ship leaves at 12:00 and arrives at Sijiao Island at 15:00. It sets off from Sijiao at 9:00 the next day and arrives at Luchao Port at 11:30. Passengers can take a special-line bus from the city centre of Shanghai to Luchao Port. Bus fare is included in the boat

ticket. Costs: Upper class: 47 yuan; Middle class: 39 yuan.

#### Dinghai → Sijiao

This route is particularly convenient for tourists visiting Ningbo or Putuo Mountain. There are one or two ships each day sailing on this route.

1. Maosheng Ship: It sets off at 7:50 from Sijiao, reaches Daju at 8:50 and arrives at the Sanjiang Port of Dinghai at 9:50. The return trip begins at 10:30 and ends at



12:40 when it reaches Sijiao, via Daju.

2. Feixinghu: The ship leaves Dinghai at 8:00 and arrives at Shengsi at 11:00. It sets off from Shengsi at 13:00 and arrives in Dinghai at 16:00. Cost: 84 yuan.

### ◆ Accommodation

Shengsi has many hotels and restaurants and most of them are concentrated on Sijiao Island. While visiting other islands, you can also find hostels there. The food is mainly fresh seafood

◆ **Shopping** Jelly fish, dried shrimp and peasant paintings.

◆ **Website for information:** <http://www.ss.zj.cninfo.net/>

1. The beach is a paradise for children.

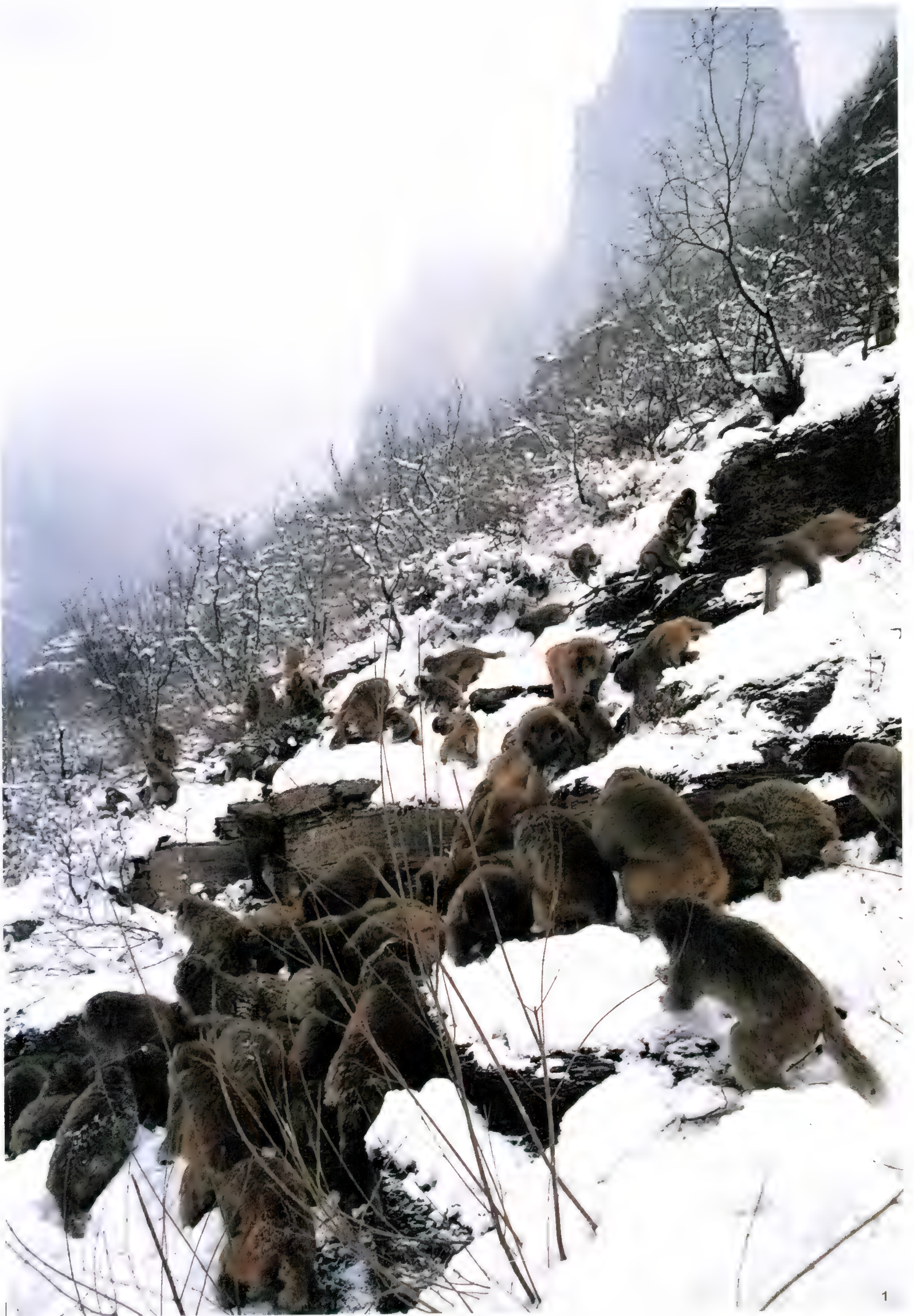
2. Shengshan is a prosperous fishing harbour.

3. Fishing boats setting out on their journey at sunrise.

4. Harmony prevails in the small fishing harbour.











# Wangwu Mountain in Spring Snow

*Photos & article by Yang Xingfang*

On March 28, 2000, a rarely seen heavy snowfall covered the entire North China Plain in white. Henan Province, located in Central China, also witnessed a heavy snowfall, the likes of which had not been seen over the past 100 years. Falling continuously for a day and a night, the snow rapidly reached two feet in depth.

The thick snow reminded me of Wangwu Mountain, which I had frequently visited over the years. The mountain draped in pure white snow must be an exceptional sight, an opportunity not to be missed. It was time for another visit. Getting up very early on the following morning, I washed and dressed quickly. After taking a few mouthfuls of food for breakfast, I began preparing for the trip. Putting on my warm boots, jeans, a photographer's vest and a yellow traveller's cap, I set out, taking along my cameras and plenty of film.

When I reached the bus station, I learned there were no buses going to the mountain because of the heavy snow. How absent-minded I was! Preoccupied with the prospect of enjoying the beautiful snow views, I overlooked the difficulties involved in travelling in this kind of weather. Fortunately, there was a jeep for hire, charging 60 yuan a day (compared with only 5 yuan by bus), a fairly reasonable price. It so happened that a few other photo-enthusiasts were there. After exchanging a few brief remarks, we decided to hire the jeep together and go ahead with the journey.



# Photographing Snow in the Freezing Cold

Photos by Lin Shaohua, Shi Yongting Article by Shi Yongting

## Keeping Warm

Photographing ice and snow in an intensely cold mountain area where the temperature is lower than  $-20^{\circ}\text{C}$  is not an easy undertaking. If conditions permit, it is preferable to dress in a down coat, down pants and a pair of long down snow boots. So attired, you will be able to walk about relatively comfortably in one or two feet of snow on a mountain slope in search of a good camera angle. Snow will not get into your trouser legs or shoes and your legs and feet will be protected against frost bite.

## Choosing a Cold-Resistant Camera

The photographic equipment you use should be able to work normally in temperatures of lower than  $-20^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Cameras with mechanical shutters are better, though some cameras with electronically controlled shutters also work well. I have always used a Pentax 67 camera to photograph ice and snow and have worked in temperatures down to  $-32^{\circ}\text{C}$ . The electronic shutter of the Pentax has never failed me. A photographer friend of mine used a single-lens reflex camera with mechanical shutters. As one of his lenses with built-in leaf shutters was frozen, all the pictures taken with



Snow blown by wind at the foot of the Changbai Mountains. (by Lin Shaohua)

that lens were badly over-exposed. Another photographer friend went to the Changbai Mountains in winter and exposed more than 20 rolls of slide film. When he had the film developed, they were all black because they had not been exposed at all. The camera he used was a medium-format single-lens reflex with electronically controlled shutters. These examples show that either a camera with mechanical shutters or a camera with electronic shutters may encounter problems. To prevent this from happening, always use a camera that has been tested in low temperatures. And don't forget to carry fresh batteries against emergencies.

## Cameras Easier to Handle

As far as the format of a camera is concerned, I am for using a medium-format camera because a photograph of a snow scene usually requires a larger ratio of enlargement. Although a still larger film area is more desirable, a large-format camera is not as easy to handle as a medium-format camera. A small 35-mm camera is, of course, more convenient.

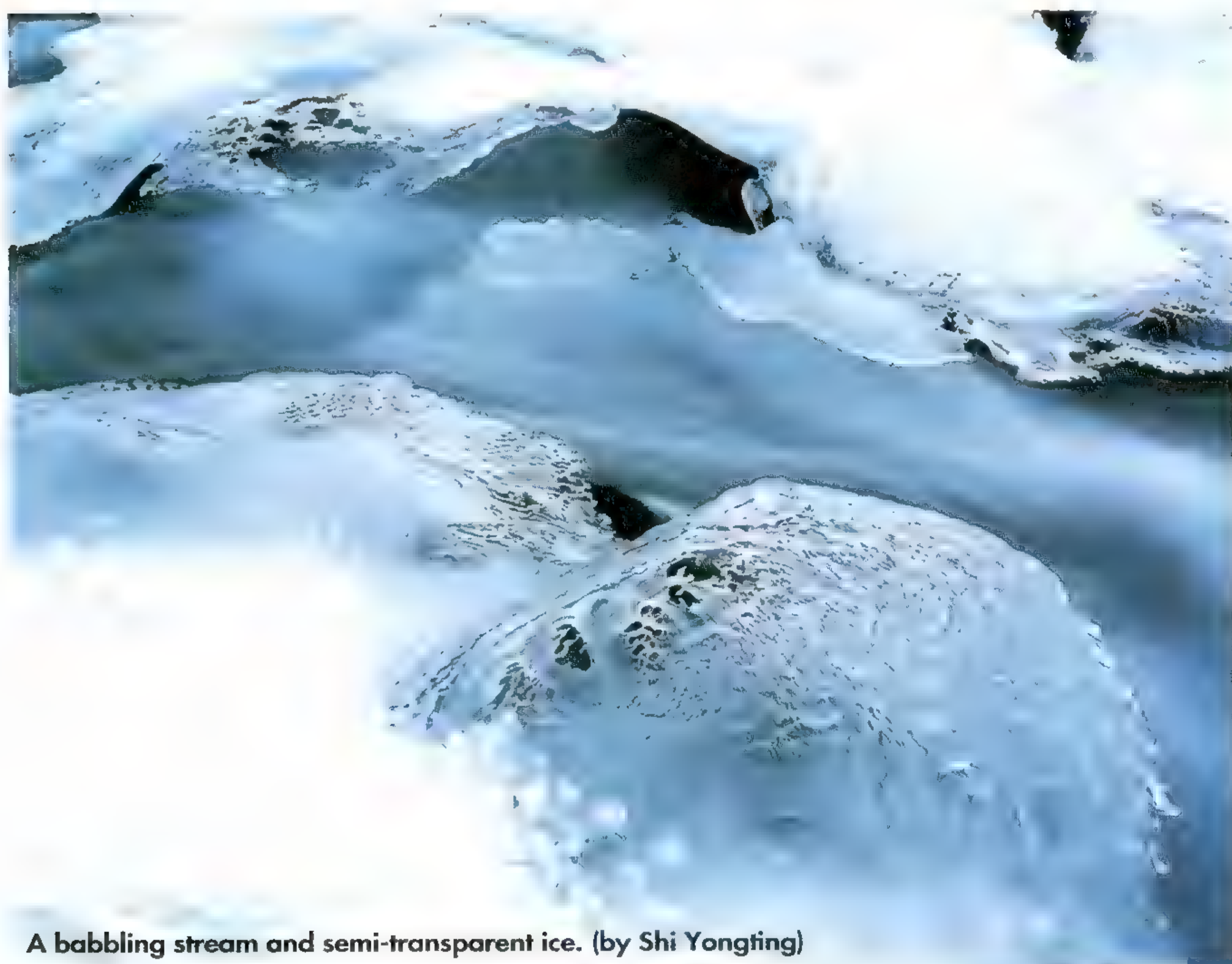
## A Tripod Is Indispensable

A tripod is very important. It is necessary to choose a sturdy tripod suited to the camera size.

However good the quality of a lens may be, its potential cannot be brought into full play if the tripod shakes at the moment of exposure. A good tripod is important because, for ice and snow, we often use a small aperture and slower shutter speed and there is often wind. It is advisable to use a tripod weighing at least three kilograms.

## Protecting the Camera

Once you have finished taking your photos, no matter how cold and tired you are, you should put your cameras and lenses into the bag and fasten its cover firmly. You should not open the bag within the first few hours of



A babbling stream and semi-transparent ice. (by Shi Yongting)



## The Mountain and the Foolish Old Man

Located in Jiyuan City in northwestern Henan Province, Wangwu Mountain borders Shanxi Province and lies 40 km from downtown Jiyuan. Legend tells us that this very mountain was moved away by the Foolish Old Man from the front of his home. All the trees we saw along the way had turned a crystal white. We were so delighted that we shouted and sang at the tops of our voices. I consumed nearly an entire film in a very short while.

As the road was slippery, it took us over three hours to cover a distance that would normally take only one hour, and get as far as the group sculpture entitled "The Foolish Old Man Moving the Mountain", still some way from the foot of the mountain. The road ahead became narrower and more winding. On one side were steep cliffs and on the other, deep valleys. The road became too treacherous to drive any further. We left the jeep to continue the journey on foot. Finally, we managed to get to Ziwei Palace at the foot of the mountain. From this point to Tiantan Jiding (Top of the Heavenly Terrace), the highest peak of the mountain, it would take us another four hours (two hours in fine weather).

## Uncanny Workmanship of Nature

Daunted by the towering summit, the other members in the group withdrew. At this juncture, a young man named Li went by. He was to deliver additional provisions to the forest farm at the top of the mountain. All or nothing, I bid farewell to my friends and followed the young man up the mountain road. The ordeal that followed was unimaginable. In a short while, my underwear was soaked with sweat. Now and then, I had to stop to catch my breath. When thirsty, I would have a mouthful of snow, and when hungry, I would have a

### Tips for the Traveller

#### Transport

- > Arriving in Zhengzhou, capital of Henan Province, by air or train.
- > Upon arrival in Zhengzhou, you can then change to a long-distance bus (one in every 10 minutes) going to Shanxi, and get down at Jiyuan. There are many charming views on the way.
- > From Jiyuan, there is a bus setting off for Wangwu Mountain every 20 minutes.



few bites of the cold bread and pickles I had brought with me. Despite all the hardship, however, I did not forget to take pictures of the wonderful views.

Four and half hours later, I reached Tiantan Jiding, 1,175 metres above sea level. The view left me speechless. Looking into the distance, the entire mountain was just like a huge painting of towering peaks, precipitous cliffs, green forests under white snow, floating clouds and narrow meandering footpaths. Standing at the top of the highest peak of Wangwu Mountain, I came to understand how petty man is compared with nature. I let myself go: shouting, laughing and crying without restraint, knowing that in the embrace of Mother Nature there was no need to hide anything.

The snowy clouds floated amidst the mountain peaks and the mountains moved among the clouds. I went on shooting pictures of this wonderful landscape, forgetting time, hunger and fatigue. All I heard was the click of the shutter.

Eventually, I felt hungry. It was getting dark and impossible for me to get back down the mountain. I had to put up for the night in a small hut at the farm. In the evening, I cooked together with the young man Li and other rangers. Then I had a large bowl of soupy noodles together with some bread and pickles. They tasted so good

there and then, better than all the star-hotel delicacies I had tasted in my entire life.

Although in the morning of the next day, the sky was still gloomy, offering no chance of capturing the sunrise, I was thrilled to have had such an opportunity to see these beautiful mountains and valleys, before which I felt my soul had been purified....

*Translated by Z. G. Li*



1. Monkeys playing on the snow land.
2. Viewed from the top of the summit, the natural scenery looks like a beautiful painting.



DISCOVERIES







Ermans birches in the early morning cast long lines of golden rays on the snow. (by Shi Yongting)



Layer upon layer of accumulated snow at the Twin-Peak Forestry Farm. (by Lin Shaohua)


entering a warm room, otherwise the cameras and lenses that have been freezing for a whole day will be coated with frost. When the frost turns into moisture, the moisture will remain in your cameras and lenses and take a long time to evaporate, which may damage them. This is important to know when taking photographs in winter.

### Photographing Snow

Using a filter may improve a photograph of snow, but this does not mean that filters can be used at any time. Filters should not be used if the situation does not require it. If a filter turns a photograph into a monotone of the colour of the filter, it will spoil the picture. If conditions allow, it is important to use a good quality filter. A bad filter will affect the quality of the picture.

The colour of a photograph of ice and snow can be enhanced by the difference in colour temperature. For example, in the early morning sunlight, the unusually shaped Ermans birches will cast long lines of golden light on the snow. A distant shot of the sunrise on a mountain can be dramatised by the orange-yellow colour of the morning sun and the blue colour of the shadows. This picture of the sunrise on Mount Changbai was not easily done. I got up at 2 a.m. and, equipped with an electric torch and chocolates for more body heat, climbed for three hours without a pause up a snowy mountain in temperatures below  $-20^{\circ}\text{C}$ . It took me two trips to get that picture.

Daylight hours for taking photographs are shorter in winter, but do not pack your camera in a hurry when the sun is going down. It often happens that when the sun has sunk down on the horizon or behind a mountain, the colours of the sky become even more dramatic.

In order to make a large area of snow in a picture appear in pure white, it is important to use the correct exposure, especially when you are using slide film. The readings given by a camera's built-in metering system or a reflected-light meter can only be used as a reference. A picture exposed by their reading will appear greyish. To make the snow look white, exposure should be increased by about one stop. The correct way of measuring the light is to take an on-the-spot reading with an incident-light meter or a reading of the reflected light from an 18 percent grey board with a spot meter. The exposure is then determined by what is actually required in the picture and by your experience. 



A village on the Songhua River Plain in winter. (by Lin Shaohua)



Mount Changbai in the orange-yellow morning sunlight. (by Shi Yongting)





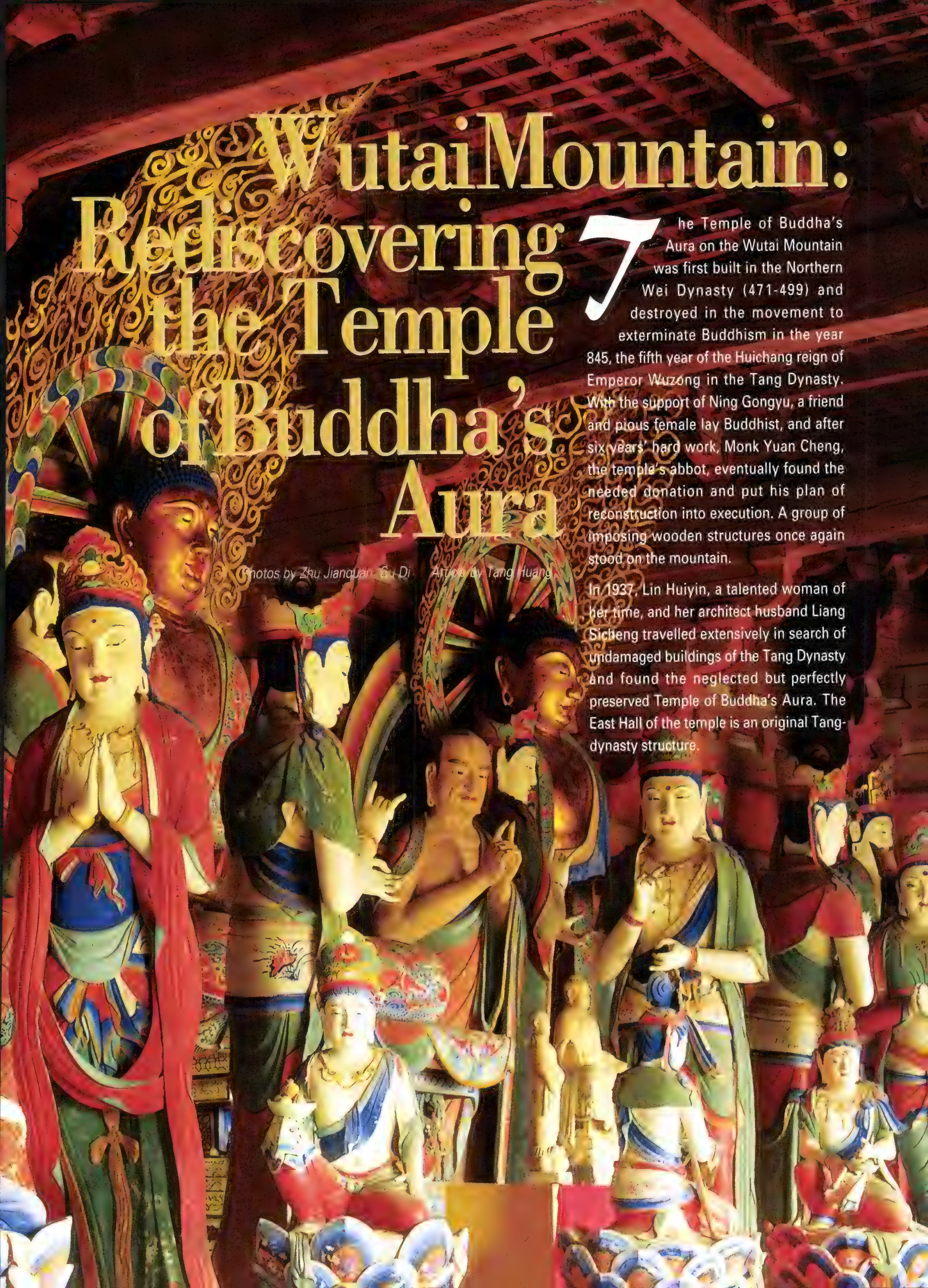


# Wutai Mountain: Rediscovering the Temple of Buddha's Aura

Photos by Zhu Jianqian · Gu Di     Art by Tang Huang

The Temple of Buddha's Aura on the Wutai Mountain was first built in the Northern Wei Dynasty (471-499) and destroyed in the movement to exterminate Buddhism in the year 845, the fifth year of the Huichang reign of Emperor Wuzong in the Tang Dynasty. With the support of Ning Gongyu, a friend and pious female lay Buddhist, and after six years' hard work, Monk Yuan Cheng, the temple's abbot, eventually found the needed donation and put his plan of reconstruction into execution. A group of imposing wooden structures once again stood on the mountain.

In 1937, Lin Huiyin, a talented woman of her time, and her architect husband Liang Sicheng travelled extensively in search of undamaged buildings of the Tang Dynasty and found the neglected but perfectly preserved Temple of Buddha's Aura. The East Hall of the temple is an original Tang-dynasty structure.





was a very old building. Could it be older than the oldest wooden structures we had found before?"

They immediately threw themselves into work. They examined each of the sets of brackets, beams and carved column bases and found that all of them bore the characteristics of the late Tang period. Could they ascertain the exact year of construction?

Despite the fact that Lin was suffering from advanced tuberculosis, she took the lead in climbing into the dark space of the vault sealed off by the ceiling board more than 10 metres above the floor. Liang followed behind even though he was handicapped in one of his legs as a result of a car accident and a poor subsequent surgical operation. They were excited and happy to find that the roof of the hall was built with double rafters, which they had only seen in Tang-dynasty paintings. Buildings of later periods used single rafters. The roof rested on the beams by means of large wooden triangular supports, which they had never seen before except in ancient paintings. Accumulated on the beams was a thick layer of 1,000 years' dust, which was like cotton when they stepped on it. The spaces between the rafters were occupied by thousands of bats, which dashed here and there and spread a horrid stench when the flash of their camera went off. There were also millions of bed bugs, which fed on the blood of the bats.

### For a Whole Week, They Worked from Morning to Night

7 he couple stayed in the temple for a whole week, working from morning till night, taking measurements and drawings, shooting photographs, observing and jotting down notes. Meanwhile, they discovered priceless sculptures, mural paintings and calligraphic works of the Tang Dynasty in the hall.

Still they were not sure as to the date of the building. Liang found a damaged mural portraying a Bodhisattva and his attendants. The style of the painting was very close to that of the Tang murals in the Dunhuang Grottoes, but it had no date written on it. A few days later, they found ink marks on the underside of the main beam. As the hall was more than 10 metres high and it was rather dark inside, they strained their eyes in an attempt to decipher what was written



on it. Lin stared at the ink marks for a long time and as she was longsighted, she was able to see that the ink marks formed the characters for "Female disciple Ning Gongyu."

Immediately, they found some villagers to put up a scaffold. After the beam and a column were cleaned, characters began to appear on the beam.

The characters were so indistinct that they could hardly make them out, especially when the water for cleaning the beam dried up. It took them three days to decipher the inscription. From the inscription written in the elegant Tang style of calligraphy, they learned that the sponsor of the hall was Madame Ning Gongyu and the temple was rebuilt in the 11th year of the Dazhong reign, or 857.

It was a coincidence in history that two women, Ning Gongyu of the Tang Dynasty and Lin Huiyin of contemporary China, worked on the same goal — to present the best of the Tang-dynasty architecture to the world. Lin Huiyin was a well-known beauty (in appearance, talent and style) of the Republic period. Ning Gongyu was certainly no ordinary woman. As a woman active in the capital city of Chang'an in the late Tang period, she must have been a prominent figure well acquainted with many powerful people. At a time when the ban on Buddhism had been removed only a few years before, and people were still jittery, Ning was brave enough to help Abbot Yuan Cheng in fulfilling his wish to reconstruct the temple by finding someone to finance it. The donor, Wang Shoucheng, was then General of the Right Army. In those days, the army had three branches, Left, Right and Central. The supreme commander of the army was the marshal. The general ranked only below the marshal. It would certainly not have been difficult for the General of the Right Army to collect some money for the reconstruction of the temple. It had probably never occurred to Wang Shoucheng that his donation would leave both the temple and his name to posterity.

In the past 1,000 years and more, China has experienced many wars and countless natural disasters, including floods, fire and earthquakes. Few wooden structures could survive them even if they were supposed to be protected by Bodhisattvas. To maintain many of the historically important temples, repairs were carried out during all the successive dynasties. During these repairs, however, the existing structures were often pulled down and replaced with new ones in the prevailing style of the time. As a result, the old





## Generous Donor Found

**B**y 857, the 11th year of Emperor Xuanzong Dazhong reign, the Tang Dynasty had reached its late period. In the 10th lunar month of that year, Monk Yuan Cheng's wish was finally fulfilled when reconstruction of the temple began after his six-year endeavour taking him back and forth between Chang'an and the Wutai Mountain.

Monk Yuan Cheng was a distinguished monk of the Tang Dynasty. According to the "Biography of Yuan Cheng" included in the "Records of High Monks" in *History of the Song Dynasty*, he was a learned scholar, who later became a Buddhist convert and studied Buddhism under Monk Xing Yan. When Emperor Wuzong of the Tang Dynasty issued a decree banning Buddhism in 845, the Buddhist establishments all over the country were razed to the ground and monks and nuns were forced to return to secular life. No large and small temple on Wutai Mountain escaped destruction. Monk Yuan Cheng was then the abbot of the Temple of Buddha's Aura in Doucun Village on Wutai Mountain. After the temple was destroyed and all the monks dispersed, he was left alone with the ruins. Several years later, when Emperor Wuzong passed away and Emperor Xuanzong, a devoted Buddhist believer, took the throne, the destroyed Buddhist temples and monasteries throughout the country were rebuilt.

In 851, Monk Yuan Cheng travelled to Chang'an again and found Ning Gongyu, a female lay Buddhist whom he had known when he lived in the Tang capital many years before. The sincere Buddhist Ning showed warm support for the reconstruction of the Temple of

Buddha's Aura. She found a generous donor in Wang Shoucheng, a powerful eunuch court official.

By the time the Temple of Buddha's Aura was rebuilt, Wang Shoucheng had passed away, leaving an inscription by Ning Gongyu beneath a beam of the temple's East Hall, which reads, "The Buddhist hall is built with money donated by the deceased Wang, Commander of the Right Army."



## A Perfect Tang-Dynasty Structure Rediscovered

**T**he East Hall of the Temple of Buddha's Aura, a perfect wooden structure of the Tang Dynasty, had been standing undisturbed for centuries until 1937, when it was rediscovered by Lin Huiyin, a talented woman, and her husband Liang Sicheng, a celebrated architect.

Liang was one of the most prominent architects in China who studied architecture in the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. Lin went with him to the United States and also wished to study architecture. However, the University of Pennsylvania's Department of Architecture refused to enrol a female student at that time. Lin could only sit in the classroom as an observer, but she learned a lot nevertheless. After the couple returned to China, Lin often helped her husband in drawing designs and writing papers. In the summer of 1937, Lin Huiyin, who had become known for her poem, "The Fourth Month in the Human World", was on an investigative tour in North China with her husband Liang and some others.

Liang had always believed that there must be undamaged buildings of the Tang Dynasty in China. Over the years, he travelled to Hebei, Henan and other places and visited many ancient temples and other buildings. He had found a lot, but most of the structures of the Sui and Tang dynasties he saw had undergone reconstruction and been replaced by structures in the styles of the Song, Ming and Qing periods, leaving behind, at best, a column or a beam of the original Tang period. The older and the more famous the temple, the more extensive the restructuring. The restructuring often obliterated all of the original appearance. The Liang and Lin husband and wife team later changed their strategy and started to look for smaller and less known temples.

From the writings of a French Sinologist on the mural paintings in Dunhuang, they found mention of temples on the Wutai Mountain. The Temple of Buddha's Aura, a small temple in a remote area, attracted their attention. In his "Notes on the Architecture of the Temple of Buddha's Aura on the Wutai Mountains" Liang wrote in detail how excited he was when he saw the East Hall of the temple: "It was an imposing structure with large, firm and neat beam-supporting brackets and extended eaves. At a glance, I could see it



**Previous page: The 35 coloured statues in the East Hall are well-proportioned and in flowing lines. They are masterpieces of Tang sculpture. (by Gu Di)**

- 1. These donor Bodhisattvas are beautifully sculpted in natural and flowing lines with close-fitting clothes. (by Gu Di)**
- 2. The East Hall is built on an elevated foundation. Its simple and tasteful designs of doors, windows, walls, beam-supporting brackets and doorframes are all painted in red. (by Shan Xiaogang)**
- 3. An arhat holds a Buddhist sutra in his hand. There used to be 500 arhats in the East Hall. Only 286 remain at present. (by Zhang Guangyin)**





During the New Year holidays, the author went with several photographers to see the enchanting natural scenery of the famous Mount Gongga and Mugar Co in the Kangba area, a stretch of highland lying between Sichuan Province and the Tibet Autonomous Region in Southwest China.

# ON THE KANGBA PLATEAU WITH PHOTOGRAPHERS

Photos by Hong Lan Article by Qu Hong

## ERLANG MOUNTAIN — THE GATES OF HELL

Shortly after seven o'clock on the morning of December 31, when the day was just breaking in Chengdu, Guo Ji, a professional photographer and an old friend of mine, had already parked his Isuzu jeep in front of my apartment building. When I climbed into the jeep, I found that two passengers were sitting inside. I soon learned that the elder one was Mr. Feng, and the younger one Mr. Jin, both of them established photographers. When I put my bags in the boot, I found that it was already packed with large and small cases belonging to the other three. I wondered what was inside them.

In winter, there is often fog in the morning in Chengdu. But the air was unusually clear on that day. I could see stars and the moon in the faint light of the morning sky. Heaven was particularly magnanimous at the end of the century and gave special consideration to Chengdu where the sun does not often shine. While people in the city were still huddled up in their warm beds on that holiday morning, we were already speeding along the deserted Chengdu-Ya'an Highway. We drove at very high speed, reaching Ya'an just after 8 a.m., from where we began to drive into the mountains. We opened the windows to enjoy the delightfully fresh air, and felt perfectly contented.



temples became new buildings.

Many famous temples on the Wutai Mountain are alleged to have been built during the Northern Wei, Sui or Tang dynasties. They are, in fact, structures in the Ming and Qing style. The East Hall of the Temple of Buddha's Aura is the only exception. It has survived all the changes of the past 1,000 years and retained the great Tang style. It is still a stirring experience to visit it after 1,143 years.

### The Unusually Magnificent Tang Structure — the East Hall

The East Hall stands on a terrace several dozen metres high in the rearmost part of the temple with a sheer cliff behind it. A flight of more than 100 stone steps leads to it. Two cypresses of the Tang period stand in front of the hall. The hall is an imposing single-storey building about 16 metres high, more than 40 metres wide and more than 20 metres deep. The tile-covered roof slopes down from the ridge with the lower edges projecting far beyond the walls. The pottery figures on the rooftop and its edges are boldly sculptured in mysterious shapes. The hall is indeed a work of art handed down from the heyday of the great Tang Dynasty.

Although the door of the hall is nearly six metres high, it is still dark inside the hall. The principal shrine for the Buddhist statues is almost the same width as the hall. Arranged in a single row on it are several dozen Buddhist statues of different heights. At the centre are the three sitting statues of Sakyamuni, Amitabha and Bhaisajya, each about three metres high. They are finely sculptured with round faces and long, arched brows. On either side of them are Samantabhadra and Manjusri, two Bodhisattvas, one riding on an elephant and the other on a unicorn. Standing on the left and right of the shrine are Buddhist guardians with swords and armours in hand, each over four metres high. The most beautiful and lively sculptured images are the female attendants and donors who stand around the Buddha and Bodhisattvas. Dressed in close-fitting and graceful clothes of low neckline and bare arms, they bend slightly forward and their stomachs protrude a little. Some gesture with the thumb joining the middle finger and others carry offerings. All of them have dignified features. Although they are different in their expressions, showing they are either meditating or breaking into a faint smile, they are unusually charming and attractive.

At the extreme left of the stand is a life-size statue of a female donor who sits unassumingly with her hands in her sleeves and her legs crossed. Her hair combed upward, she is dressed in a wide-collared robe with

the collar of her inner clothes turned out. A shawl embroidered with cloud designs is draped across her shoulders. This is the likeness of Ning Gongyu, the sponsor of the Buddhist hall. She has long brows, long and narrow eyes and a straight nose. She looks about middle-aged with well filled-out cheeks and a black spot above her upper lip. Her regular features show that she was a woman of agreeable, firm and distinguished character, and who would do what she said and never wavered. From this realistic and lifelike statue, we could see that the sculptors of the Tang Dynasty were as good as their European counterparts in their skills. There is also a statue of Monk Yuan Cheng in the hall. He is portrayed as a man of self-confidence and peaceful character.

1. The Tang mural in the East Hall is the only one to be found in the existing wooden buildings in China. (by Zhu Jianquan)
2. The Founding Master's Pagoda on the southern side of the hall is a hexagonal two-storey structure of about eight metres high with its roof decorated with carvings of lotus petals and pearls. It is the only structure of the original Northern Wei temple. (by Zhu Jianquan)
3. The East Hall is the second oldest extant wooden building in China. The wooden structure of Nanchan Temple, also on the Wutai Mountain, is the oldest. (by Li Zemin)

### Tips for the Traveller

• **Transport:** The Temple of Buddha's Aura is located at Foguang New Village, 6 km north of Doucun Town, Wutai County. It can be reached by a long-distance bus from Taiyuan to Doucun and then by taxi.

• **Accommodation:** There is a choice of several places to stay at Taihuai Town more than 30 km from the temple.  
Wutai Mountain Yunfeng Hotel \*\*\*: Tel: (350) 654 2174  
Wutai Mountain Qixiang Hotel \*\*: Tel: (350) 654 2183  
Admission: 7 yuan.







drive through the most dangerous sections; but there were still hazards in other sections. At this moment, even Guo Ji who had been cracking jokes and telling stories all along the way was silent as he concentrated on his driving. The tunnel was not yet entirely completed. As the road was narrow, the traffic department imposed a one-way traffic control. Vehicles were to drive through the tunnel according to a timetable, which alternated between odd and even days. On an even day, the east-heading vehicles were to drive through the tunnel between 12 noon and 3 p.m. On an odd day, the west-heading vehicles were to use the tunnel between 7 a.m. and 10 a.m. As it was the 31st day, the tunnel opened at noon. We reached the tunnel after 11 a.m. and joined the queue there. While we were on the way, I had seen quite a few west-heading vehicles and thought we would be just in time. However, when we arrived at the tunnel, there was already a long queue. Guo Ji told us that since the heavily loaded trucks could not drive very fast, many of them had arrived the previous evening, stayed at the foot of the mountain for the night and begun to climb the mountain at daybreak. If they failed to join the queue in time, they would have to make a detour of several dozen kilometres and use the old road, which was extremely hazardous. As the queue moved slowly forward, Guo Ji accelerated and overtook one after another of the trucks until we entered the tunnel just after 12 o'clock. As the tunnel was still under construction, there was no illumination and the unpaved ground was full of bumps and water pits. The vehicles could only move forward slowly in single file. It took us about 15 minutes to reach the other end of the tunnel.

On the way, another photographer, Wang Jianjun, also

from Sichuan, joined us. He had just returned from the Conch Gully and told us that there was not much snow on the mountain and the scenery was not attractive. He suggested that we go elsewhere to take photos of the snow. After discussing it with him, Guo Ji suggested that we go to Xinduqiao first and climb over the 4,298-metre Zheduo Mountain to photograph Mount Gongga, where we would bid farewell to the sun of the 20th century. Our jeep was soon on the way to this new destination.

#### PEAKS OF MOUNT GONGGA: NONCHALANT BEAUTIES

To photograph Mount Gongga, we positioned ourselves on the summit of the Gorsí Mountain 4,500 metres above sea level. The great Gorsí Mountain has distinct sunny and shady sides. The road up the mountain was a rugged one. The sunny side was clear and dry, and it was covered with ice and snow on the shady side. Even worse, the passing vehicles had flattened the snow, making the road surface very slippery. An inexperienced driver might easily swerve from the sunny side to the shady side at high speed and meet with a fatal accident.

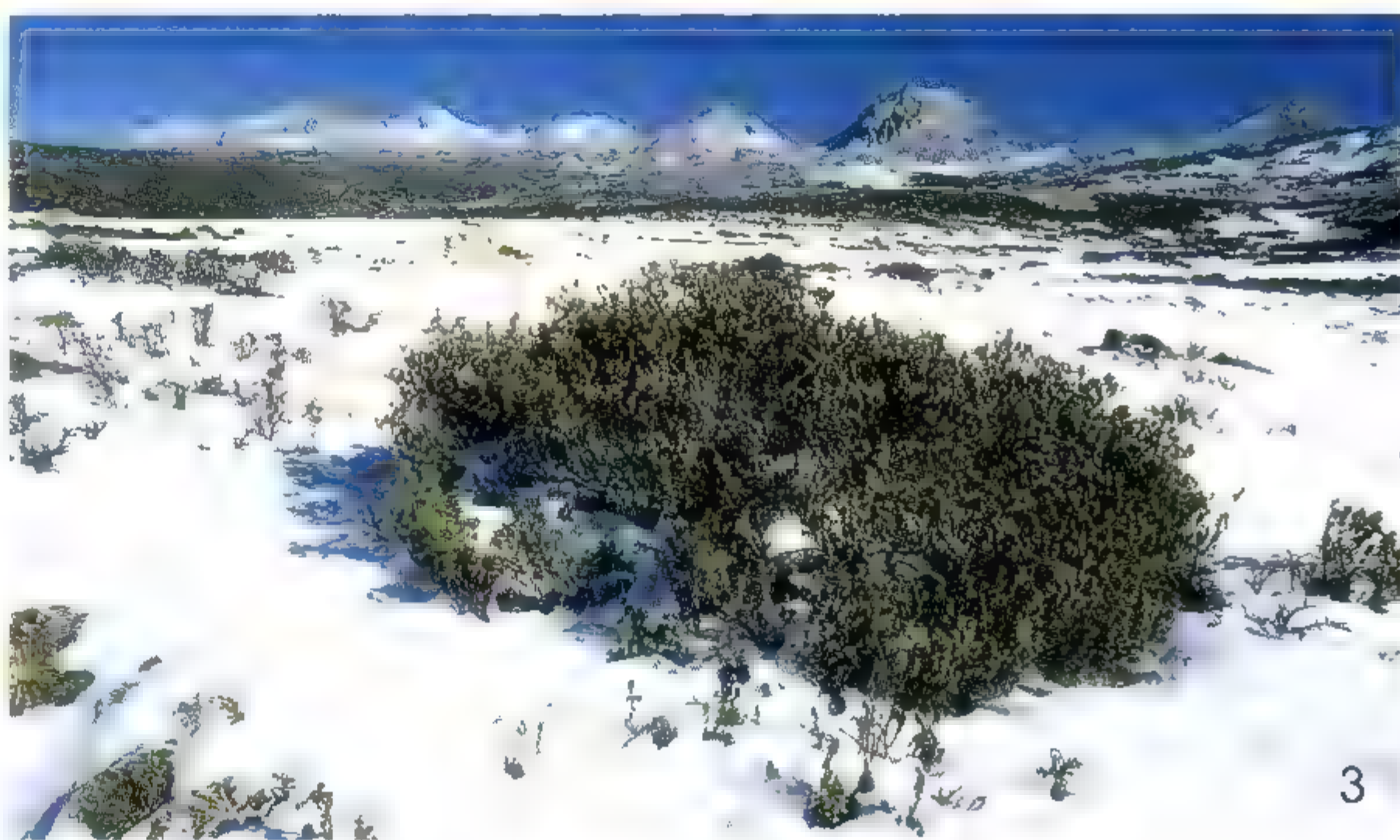
We arrived at our desired position at 5:45 p.m. It was a gentle, open slope that afforded a magnificent vista of the snow-enshrouded Mount Gongga. I had never seen such a beautiful chain of snowy peaks. They stood like pretty but indifferent women in the distance. Even from this distance I could almost feel their nonchalant eyes. Wang Jianjun said that the setting sun would shine on Mount Gongga at about 6 p.m. and would last a maximum of 20 minutes. Everybody must get ready immediately. At his words, the photographers quickly took their chosen positions, rigged up their cameras





I had seen a TV documentary, *Wind and Rain on the Sichuan-Tibet Road*, which describes the hardship suffered by a truck regiment of the People's Liberation Army on the Sichuan-Tibet road. I was most impressed by the scene depicting the regiment climbing over the Erlang Mountain. It was like going through the gates of hell. One of the trucks actually plunged into an abyss in front of the camera. Frankly speaking, even though I had made full mental and practical preparations against the difficulties of this journey, climbing over the Erlang Mountain still worried me. The difficulties and dangers involved were expressed in a song, which I had learned to sing when I was a child, "The Erlang Mountain is ten thousand feet high". Ever since a tunnel had been bored through the mountain, vehicles no longer had to

1. A model posing for the photographer.
2. The Zheduo Mountain Highway, along which the author travelled to the Gorsí Mountain to photograph Mount Gongga.
3. Bushes along the road up the Zheduo Mountain.








was covered with luxuriant vegetation and dense forests. The snowy trees were like white-haired mountain gods standing on guard duty. Mugar Co, covering an area of four square kilometres, is Kangding's largest highland lake located at 3,700 metres above sea level. The water in the lake exceeds 70 metres in depth. Within this scenic area there are also the Red, White and Black lakes and about 30 other unnamed bodies of water, with scenic spots given fascinating names such as "Crouching Stone Tiger" and "Stone Lion Guarding the Lake". The waterfalls, clouds and mist in the area form various wonderful sights over the seasons, including the so-called "Double-Layered Fog Falling into the Lake", "Sunset over Mugar Co" and "Dawn on Mugar Co". We were told that there were many wild animals in the Wild Man's Lake Scenic Area. However, we did not see any, probably because they saw us first. We did see quite a few wild ducks, snow pheasants and other birds, which gave life to the silent Mugar Co.

The greater part of Mugar Co was frozen, except a small area at the centre of the lake. The reflections of the distant mountains in the lake were like diamonds sparkling on a piece of blue silk. The photographers deftly aimed their cameras at them and cut the scenery into many frames. While occupied with his camera, Wang Jianjun shouted at the top of his voice, "Wonderful! It's wonderful!" He then began to hum a song with emotion. Suddenly, we heard a rumbling sound that came repeatedly from the distance and wondered what it was. Mugar Co is also known as the Wild Man's Lake. Even though I did not know how the name came about, I believed that it must be associated with the Wild Man. Could it be that Wang Jianjun's song was echoed by the Wild Man deep in the forest who thought it was a call from a fellow creature? We would be in trouble if it were really the voice of the Wild Man.

I asked Wang what the sound was. He replied that when the ice on the lake cracked, the sound was produced by the clash of blocks of ice. "Listen. It's a very beautiful sound," he said. Feeling carefree, I began to walk towards the lake, cupping my ears with my hands to listen to the music produced by nature. At one moment, it was like the rumbling of thunder perhaps the cries of the wild beasts and dinosaurs of remote antiquity. At another, it was like the clear ringing of bells in the wind or a vehement exchange of gunfire. It sounded authentic and without the least pretension.

### THE MEDICINAL BOILING SPRINGS

There is a group of hot springs at Mugar Co, called Medicinal Boiling Springs, with several dozen high-temperature outlets concentrated within a small area. The water flowing from the springs is so hot that one cannot put one's bare feet into it. Feng said that he would bring some cartons of milk with him next time, so that he could have hot milk after taking photos. Jin said he should also bring some eggs because the water was hot enough to cook them. We were told that the spring water could be drunk directly. The outlets of the springs, however, are very small and allow only a small quantity of water to flow out at a time, just enough for people to wash their feet in. The spring water is transparently clear here. I tried to drink it and found there was not much of a sulphur taste to it. Tea made with the spring water is said to taste differently. It is a pity that while hotels at the Huashuiwan Hot Springs in Chengdu are attracting a large number of bathers, the hot springs at Mugar Co are not put to good use. 

*(Note: The Erlang Mountain tunnel was completed in May 2000. The time used for passing the mountain has been greatly decreased.)*

1. Playing billards is a favourite pastime of the local inhabitants.
2. The water of the Medicinal Boiling Springs is of high temperature, but the pools are only deep enough for people to wash their feet.

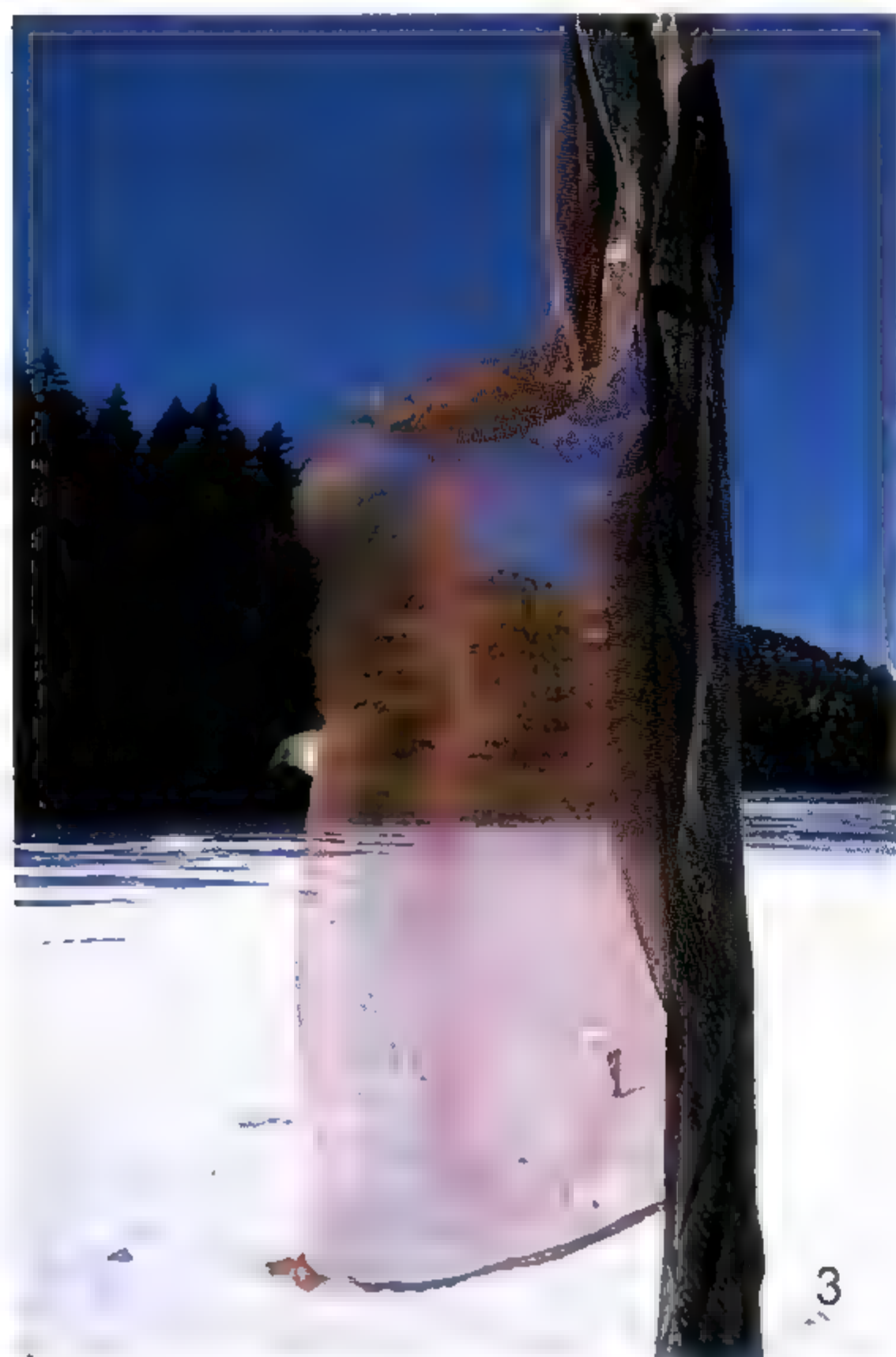




with long and short lenses on tripods and were ready to shoot. When I saw what they were doing, I realised what had been inside the cases they carried in the jeep. Feng and Jin were equipped with large 4x5 cameras while the other two used medium-format Hasselblads. Compared with theirs, the Canon EOS5 and Hasselblad Xpan I carried with me looked like children's toys.

There was a strong wind on the mountain, and the temperature was about -20°C. My hands and feet were freezing cold. As the last sun of the century was sinking slowly in the west, it turned gradually from white to yellow and shaded its glaring rays as if intentionally giving us something to remember it by. "It's coming! It has turned red!" Suddenly, I heard Wang Jianjun shouting with excitement. I turned to look at Mount Gongga and found that the tops of the mountain peaks were dyed a golden red by the setting sun. Half way up the mountain, there was a ribbon of reflected red light. The icy beauties had awakened and were tying their waistbands. Discarding their nonchalance, they began to show their feminine charms. In a few moments, they were draped in red gauze and became graceful and charming. None of us spoke, as if we were afraid that the sound of our voices should frighten the pretty Gongga maidens away. All we did was continually change position and click the shutters of our cameras to capture the maidens forever on film. It was probably because of the clicking of the shutters and the sight of the array of long and short lenses, that the maidens blushed and quickly disappeared behind a rising mist. It was indeed bewitchingly beautiful. I then understood why photographers spare no effort in their pursuit of light and shadow in nature. The sun is not only the source of life, but also the make-up artist of nature, its ultimate beautifier.

The sky was now dyed crimson as the sun exerted its last



effort of the century to add colour to nature and leave a good impression behind so that people could remember the service it had performed over the century. On the freezing cold mountain, we bid farewell to the last rays of the century's sun.

## GREETING THE DAWN OF THE NEW CENTURY

On the early morning of January 1, when most people in the cities had just retired to their bedrooms after bidding farewell



to the old year and welcoming the new, we stationed ourselves again on the mountain slope under the starry sky, waiting for the dawn of the new century. Although it was cold and there was a strong wind, our hearts were warm because the new sun would give us renewed hope and we were about to record the first light of the new century with our cameras.

As we waited patiently, the morning sun began to rise in the east, dyeing the earth golden as if bestowing wealth upon the people. In the distance, the first cooking smoke of the new century rose from a Tibetan village and a Tibetan girl wearing a red scarf was driving sheep and cows upon the golden earth. We framed them in our viewfinders and recorded the first glory of the new century.

At the beckoning of the sun, the snowy mountain seemed to have woken up and began to display its silvery new dress. As a frozen stream began to thaw in the warmth of the sun, water trickled continually down the slope. At this moment, we heard Guo Ji's voice calling. He had found a picturesque spot, where a frozen river flanked by two ridges was sparkling in a golden hue in the sun. The photographers quickly put up their 4x5 cameras and busied themselves, as if they were digging a gold mine. Before they had finished taking pictures, Guo Ji had already found a title for his photographic work, "A Year of Flowing Gold", implying that time passes by like the flow of water and that people constantly renew their hopes in life. As we watched nature embellished by the rays of the first sun of the new millennium, we all fell silently into our own deep reverie.

## MUGAR CO: A PEACEFUL PRIMITIVE SCENIC AREA

Mugar Co, or Wild Man's Lake, is over 30 km from the city district of Kangding. The road leading to it was not bad, but as it had snowed heavily on the mountain and the narrow road was covered with ice, it made one sweat to drive on it. We passengers were also continually struck with alarm. The area

1. The peaks of Mount Gonggar displaying their beauty at sunset.
2. Yaks at Mugar Co have a strong vitality for living on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau.
3. A scriptural pennant hung by local Tibetans, who believe the prayers written on them will be delivered to heaven by the wind.





# Vibrant Spring Festival Celebrations

*Holiday activities best reflect folk culture and customs. And the Spring Festival, as the most important traditional festival for the Han Chinese people, is the holiday of holidays. The various cultural traditions and folk customs in different regions make the celebrations of this festival all the more colourful and diverse. The Yangge dance in Haiyang of Shandong, the pig show in the Chaozhou-Shantou area in Guangdong, the stilt-walking in Kusbuijie of Gansu, the streamer balancing in Jian'ou of Fujian, and the Nuo Opera in Guichi of Anhui are just a few of these flamboyant holiday celebrations.*







1



2

## YUNNAN'S MEADOW FUNGI DELICACIES

Photos & article by Li Zhixiong

I remember the days of my childhood, when after several heavy rainfalls in early summer, my pals and I would each take a bamboo basket and a stick, and go off to pick fungi in the mountains. Sometimes, if lucky, I would return with a full basket of mushrooms and other fungi. Since I've grown up, I've had no chance to collect fungi any more, so now I have to buy it in the market.

Recently, some friends and I made a trip to Jiuxiang in Yiliang. On both sides of the highway leading to our destination, we saw many peddlers selling meadow mushrooms they had just gathered in the mountains, at prices much lower than in the cities. Some of the local businessmen collect them and then sell them to restaurants in the cities.



3

Yunnan's meadow fungi are quite different from those in other places. Customers can enjoy fresh fungi only in the period between May and September. During this season, the local people often set out for their favourite spots in the mountains only a few hours

after a rainfall. The fungi tend to grow in the same places year after year, so they never come back empty-handed.

There is a wide range of Yunnan fungi, including "Ox Liver" and "Black Head". If not properly cooked, some meadow fungi are poisonous, causing hallucinations and other reactions. But if the right precautions are taken, these fungi are perfectly safe and very tasty. It is wise to wash the plants thoroughly and soak them in boiling water before cooking them. This will remove some of the taste, but is

necessary for removing the poison. Moreover, you should put extra oil in the pan before stir-frying fungi, and do not burn them. You should certainly never eat them raw. Before eating, you should examine the garlic used as flavouring in the fried fungi to see whether its colour has changed. If the garlic is still white, then the fungi are safe to eat. As the chefs know well about Yunnan fungi and are careful while cooking them, there have been very few cases of fungi-poisoning.

The most precious species among Yunnan fungi is the "Chicken Mushroom", which grows above termite nests. The mushroom can be eaten in many ways, including as a cold dish, stir-fried, steamed or stewed with soy sauce. Tourists visiting Kunming like to taste the local fungi dishes, and some are even brave enough to try those poisonous ones that require a special method of cooking.

Translated by Jin Jianzhong

1. There are many Yunnan dishes cooked with various wild mushrooms.
2. Fungi appear a few hours after the rain.
3. Dried fungi are sold locally at reasonable prices.
4. A farmer selling "Chicken Mushroom" in Jiuxiang.





## Guangdong | Pig Display for the Gods

Photos & article by Zhang Chuxiang

*Chaozhou and Shantou in Guangdong Province are known for the great number of gods their people worship. Apart from the famous ones such as the City God, Lord Guan, Mazu, South Pole Emperor and Heavenly Emperor, there are many other gods created and worshipped by the local people, such as the Three-mountain King, Safety Sage, Rain God, Water Immortal and Pearl Lady. In this region, many ceremonies are held to worship the gods during the Spring Festival. Of all of these, the pig show involving several hundred animals at Shanghua Town in Chenghai and Yuepu Town in Tuopu is really unique.*

### Grand Ceremony: Sacrifices and Parade

In Chaozhou and Shantou, all gods are referred to as lords, and the size of the area in which each respective lord is worshipped determines the scale and grade of the ceremony. Activities for worshipping a great lord include a sacrificial offering ceremony followed by a parade.

Since making sacrificial offerings to gods is a religious activity rooted in rural societies, the offerings are mostly chickens, duck, eggs and locally produced fruits. The parade following the ceremony is meant to dispel evil and cleanse the land. For the parade, strong men are selected to carry the sedan chair bearing the image of the god. Others in the parade are flag-bearing guards of honour, dancers and

musicians. The parade will tour every street and lane in the village before returning the god to the temple, the final touch of the ceremony.

In some villages, people hold the parade first and make the offerings later. What deserves special mention, however, is Shanghua Town, where the sacrificial offering consists of one particular item — a pig from every household. This is a unique practice among even the most traditional sacrificial ceremonies in the country. At Yuepu Township, the people combine the sacrificial ceremony with the festival marking the manhood of their youngsters. Holding the pig show as the worshipping ceremony is another unique practice.

### The Bigger the Pig, the Wealthier the Family

The 17th and 18th day of the first lunar month is the time for the big sacrificial ceremony at Shanghua Town, when residents from nearby villages converge here for the occasion. The god requires eight strong young men to carry the sedan chair and a large entourage to tour all the alleys and lanes. Whenever they come to a house, the residents will light incense by way of worshipping the god. What is unique for this town is that only a pig is offered as the sacrificial item. Every household provides a whole slaughtered pig neatly placed in front of the statue of the god and the number of pigs can be as many as 300. The residents of Shanghua belong to several clans and they host the worshipping ceremony in turn. Each Spring Festival, one big clan or several small clans play hosts of the sacrificial ceremony. While only the families of the host clan or clans offer their pigs, people of other clans also join in the celebration and have their share of pork at the end of the ceremony.

Pigs are not only sacrificial items but also items for competition. According to local historical records, the owner of the largest pig would win the acclaim of the entire town and his offering would herald a good year for the family. As a result, people compete to raise big, fat pigs and even if a given family is unable to raise its own pig, it will cooperate with other families so that their pig will be big enough to win the blessing of the god. By presenting the largest pig to show a family's piety to god, they also demonstrate their skill in raising pigs and the family's wealth.

### Pig Show — a Symbol of Manhood

The 6th day of the first lunar month is the time for the pig show at Yuepu Town. Here the conditions for entering the pig competition are different: the participant family must have at least one young man aged 24, neither older nor younger. As a result, the number of pigs displayed each year depends on the number of young men reaching that age.

On the previous day, all the pigs entering the competition are slaughtered and dressed. At 5 a.m. on the day of the sacrificial ceremony, the pigs are taken to the sacrificial platform in front of the god statue and neatly laid out. Red paper-cuts are placed on the pigs.



1. A family decorating their pig with red paper-cuts. (by Weng Zhixiong)
2. The larger the pig, the wealthier and more capable the family.
3. About 100 pigs being offered for one ceremony — an amazing sight.



## Shandong | Yangge Dance in Haiyang

Photos & article by Ren Shaohua

*Yangge is the most representative group dance of the Han people. This massive recreational art form has its roots in daily labour activities and enjoys a long history. In Haiyang, Shandong, it is widely claimed that Yangge dance appeared in the Zhou Dynasty (c. 11th century-770 B.C.) while opera didn't take its form until the Tang Dynasty (618-907). Together with the Drum Yangge in northern Shandong and the Jiaozhou Yangge in eastern Shandong, the Haiyang style of Yangge is known as one of the three major dance forms in the province. And of the three, that in Haiyang is the grandest in scale and involves the greatest number of performers.*

Writings from the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) already held records of the Yangge dance and then in the following early Qing Dynasty, the movements of the Shaolin-style martial arts were incorporated into the dance. Later under the impact of the Laishan Martial Arts Fair, the dance began to develop systematic ways of exercising martial arts, fighting, and lying and moving in battle formations. Taking examples from the classic story of *Canonised Gods*, characters wearing specific costumes began to appear in the dance, eventually giving rise to rich and changing formations in Haiyang Yangge.

The dancers mostly practise their movements in the last lunar month and stage their shows in the first month of the new year marked by the Spring Festival. A dance troupe in Haiyang may range from dozens to over 100 people. Yangge dance in Haiyang combines both singing and dancing, with dance as the most important component in terms of artistic form.



The dance in Haiyang follows the performing procedures of "three ins and three outs", "formation dance" and "variety dance". The "three ins and three outs" is the most solemn and important form of expressing New Year good wishes. When the dance troupe arrives at a village, three gunshots are fired. The leader of the village's Yangge team or the village chief will then come out to greet the dancers. All of a sudden, a thunderous sound of music is heard as gongs and drums are beaten and bugles are blown. Under the direction of the dance leader, the dancers perform in rotation, all in the highest spirits.

The Formation Dance is a collective dance expressing many forms typical of classical patterns. Accompanied by inspiring music and led by their director, the dancers burst into the circle of spectators, creating a spacious performing ground before they begin.

The variety dance includes a combined series of solo, duet and team dances. The Flowery Drum Dance, performed by males, is the most vigorous part of the performance, which always leaves in the onlookers a strong impression of excitement and victory.

Yangge dance is not only known for its varied and beautiful movements, but also its characteristic music, which consists of singing and instrumental playing. The highly rhythmic music tries to tell the story and express the mood in a clear and excited tone. Its quick tempo results in a harmonious combination of singing, musical accompaniment and dancing.

During the holiday, Yangge dancers go on tours to entertain people from village to village. Their performing tour serves to express their good wishes and helps to seal the friendship and unity among villages.

1. The "happy court officials" lead the whole troupe onto a performing ground.
2. Yangge dancers in Haiyang begin their performance on the New Year's Day and continue to perform for two weeks.







## Gansu | Rural Celebrations in Kushuijie

Photos & article by Li Kesheng

*Thirty-five kilometres west along National Highway 312 from Lanzhou, capital of Northwest China's Gansu Province, is a village called Kushuijie. Way back in history, it was a post station on the Silk Road.*

*Kushuijie has retained many traditional folk customs and some of them are unique. For instance, most of the neighbouring towns and villages in the Lanzhou area stage variety shows as part of the holiday celebration during the first half of the first month, but Kushuijie does not begin its shows until the 2nd day of the second month of the lunar year.*

### Hoisting the Streamer for Good Luck

Early on the 30th day of the first lunar month, I got on a bus setting off from Lanzhou for Kushuijie Village. An hour later, I arrived at my destination. On this day, a streamer was to be raised. This is a ceremony with a long history and is meant to dispel evil and bring in good luck.



At around 1 p.m., drums which had been sealed away for a whole year in the village were beaten, producing a sonorous noise. People from the South Street of Kushuijie Village, holding their streamer up high, came to an open space where they hoisted the 10-metre-long and half a metre-wide streamer on a previously fixed pole. On the streamer were words asking the god to ensure good weather and good luck. An elder villager began to recite a spell under the streamer and pray for blessings from the god. The crowd grew excited as the ceremony continued. Robust men quickened the tempo of their drumming and danced in vigorous movements.

At the same time, a group from the North Street was staging a kind of ceremony rather similar to a Taoist religious activity. Though the two teams of people had different kinds of ceremonies, they shared a common wish for a good year.

### Competition Between Two Streets

When the 2nd day of the second month finally arrived, villagers on the North and South streets all hung up red lanterns and swept the streets clean. Children and women were clad in their festive best. The variety show performing teams were rearing to go.

By the time the preparations were complete, it was already noon. The whole village was in a festive mood. The beating of the drums was heard approaching from the distance as the two performing teams

made their way to the opposite side. Since ancestral times, the villagers used to compete with each other for performances, and the second day of the second month came the final moment of contest. Both sides tried to keep their shows a secret from the other team so that they could outperform their opponents on the day.

The team from the North Street marched toward the south. In front of the procession were the Taiping drummers led by two bearers of huge flags. The team is composed of 16 big gongs and cymbals followed and dozens of bucket-like drums carried at the drummers' fronts. The sonorous beat of the drums offered a prominent expression of the uninhibited and intrepid characteristics of the men from the Northwest. A close look at the procession revealed that there were quite a few female drummers clad in golden-coloured ancient-style costumes and heroes' hats, just like the male drummers. This outfit gave the girls an even more heroic look.

Following behind the drummers were the teams of various other performers, such as "iron rod" holders, stilt walkers and Yangge dancers.

### 'Iron Rod' Holders Presenting Opera Images

"Iron Rods" are a must for the traditional variety shows from this region. Boys and girls in colourful clothes are attached to the top parts of the iron or steel bars three to five metres long. Their costumes cover up the rods. High in the air, the young performers present characters from ancient fairy tales, classic stories or modern operas. Within one parade, one can see various figures in many stories or operas.

Years of competition have brought forth increasing new creations. Villagers take great pains in introducing new designs for their "Iron Rods". When one side of the street stages "The Eight Immortals Crossing the Sea", the other side will return with "The Heroes of the Liangshan Mountains"; or one street produces "The Three Kingdoms", the other does "The Journey to the West".







Their mouths are filled with large oranges and their ears pinned with "golden" rings. Now all the villagers come out, examining and commenting on each pig. Children play happily among the crowd. Meanwhile, shadow puppet shows, peddlers of snacks and toys add to the holiday atmosphere.

According to the 72-year-old She Qiyin, in the past, when a youngster in Chaozhou and Shantou reached the age of 15 or 20 or 24 (differing from town to town), a manhood ceremony was held for the

youngster to appease the male and female lords of protection. According to legend, the two lords used to be a man and woman who maintained an illicit relationship and were consequently killed by the husband of the woman, who buried them under his bed. Their souls later killed all his offspring with the second wife. So on the seventh day of the first lunar month, the husband held a sacrificial ceremony for his first wife and her lover. From that day forward, his kids began to enjoy peace and safety. When the story spread, every family followed suit by hosting a sacrificial ceremony, praying to the lords of protection for the safety of their children.

The manhood ceremony means saying goodbye to one's boyhood and assuming the responsibilities of an adult. This practice is similar to the northern China custom of having the young men wear hats at the age of 20 and of kids wearing trousers at the age of 13 among some ethnic minorities. Though there is no way of telling just when the people in Chaozhou and Shantou combined the manhood ceremony with the sacrificial festival, She believes the folk custom of making sacrificial offerings to gods has a long history. During the "cultural revolution" from 1966 to 1976, people stopped holding the ceremonies but the practice has returned to the villages in recent years, except that today they are more entertaining and competitive.







## Fujian | Streamer Balancing in Jian'ou

Photos & article by Wu Shuijin

*In Jian'ou, Fujian, people have a history of more than 300 years in balancing streamers, a world-renowned unusual performance combining strength with skill.*

According to one story, towards the end of the Ming Dynasty, General Zheng Chenggong recruited a large force to cross the Taiwan Straits and reclaim the island from outside occupation. After the army under General Zheng recovered Taiwan, some of the soldiers returned home to Dazhou in victory on the 24th day of the first lunar month. The villagers held a grand party to greet them, providing a big feast and

bringing in opera performers. The returning army attached their flag to a long pole, waving it with all the might they could summon, to commemorate the martyrs who had fought along with them. Over time, this evolved into the present-day local custom.

It requires time and skill to make such a flag. To make the pole, the green skin on a very thick bamboo must first be removed. Next, red paint and patterns are applied. The pinnacle of the pole is decorated with an exquisite hexagonal pagoda made of bamboo strips and coloured silk. Smaller flags and brass bells are tied onto the pagoda. From the bottom of the pagoda, a long streamer hangs down, with words of good wishes written on it. The bottom of the pole is wrapped with layers of cloth secured by an iron ring. The biggest streamer can be more than 10 metres tall and weigh 15 kilograms.

To perform, the man has to place the pole's base on the tip of his foot first. Then he begins to gather his energy and suddenly tips his foot and the pole, still standing, rests on his shoulder or arm as he desires. In the midst of the beating of gongs and drums, he moves the pole back and forth in graceful yet breathtaking motions. He now takes the streamer in his hand, then rests it on his teeth, forehead or nose and next, moves it from his shoulder to his head. As he moves and shakes his body, the pole changes position, miraculously without falling. At the height of the performance, the streamer flutters so quickly that one's eyes find it hard to follow it as it is tossed from one performer to another, resting on different parts of the body. The ringing of the attached brass bells contribute to the lively atmosphere.

Nowadays, there is a large number of streamer-balancing performers in Jian'ou, including men and women, old and young. Their graceful movements are seen in all performance venues. Often a grandpa performs together with his grandson; a couple performs together on the same stage; or mother and daughter, and father and son are paired in one performance.



1. There are many ways of balancing the streamer in Jian'ou, Fujian. Performers toss it around and let it fall on their hand, head, shoulder or even hold it between their teeth.
- 2,3. Among the streamer performers in Jian'ou are old and young, men and women. Even kids can do the movements skillfully.





### Record-Breaking High Stilts

The stilts in Kushuijie, at a height of 3.2 metres, are the tallest in China. Stilt walking used to be performed solely by men, but nowadays girls also take part in the show. One girl with the family name of Miao from the South Street has been performing this skill for three years. During the rehearsal on the first day of the second month, she was asked to perform a female role in ancient costume, but she declined, insisting that she do the male role walking on the tallest stilts. Her boldness impressed the leader of the show who agreed to her request.

Like that in a traditional opera, there are also 12 possible roles in a stilt walking performance. The only difference is that performers do not sing in the stilt shows. However, the costumes and decorative

items are just as colourful and impressive.

While taking photos of the stilt walkers, I had to walk through the legs of these "giants". As I looked at their bold expressions and then at the bumpy country road, I was really concerned for their safety. Even more amusingly, the performers have to climb to a roof or a high wall to put on their 3.2-metre stilts. Their high stilts surely qualify for the *Guinness Book of Records*.

### Dragon Lantern Dance in the Evening

After a full day of competitive shows between the two teams, their day was not yet over. In the evening ahead, they were going to perform the dragon lantern dance.

After supper, dragon lanterns began to come out of the North and South streets. During the day, they were each trying to outdo the other, but in the evening, the situation was entirely different. The blue dragon from the South Street and the golden dragon from the North Street (as dragon dancers holding torches and walking in long lines) played with each other in total harmony. Now the two dragons danced together to please each other, then they snaked forward vigorously, to the acclaim of the spectators.

What followed was the "dragon greeting" ceremony. According to legend, the dragon lifts its head from hibernation on the second day of the second lunar month. On this day, the dragon is at its most powerful. Whoever gets blessed on this day by the dragon will enjoy good luck: the older will live longer, the young will be free of disease.

There are strict procedures for this ceremony. Every household must have an altar where incense is lit and food and wine are offered. When dragon lantern dancers come to the door, the whole family will come out to set off firecrackers and bow to invite them in. Moving from courtyard to courtyard, they perform well into the night in an attempt to bring good luck and a bumper harvest to all the families in the village.

1. The South Street has brought invited artists from the county opera troupe to help them with their makeup.
2. The streets in Kushuijie Village are thronged with people who have come out to watch the variety show.
3. Stilt walkers sitting on a wall for a break.








## Anhui | Nuo Opera in Guichi

Photos & article by Wang Qingdong

*Guichi, Anhui Province, is the home of the opera called Nuo, a kind of mask opera. The art is popular in all the villages in the southeastern part of the county, a tradition which has given rise to the claim that there is no single village without its own Nuo performance. The opera is staged during sacrificial ceremonies of worshipping the land god or ancestors.*

The performance is staged from the 7th to the 15th day of the first lunar month. Before it starts, the masks are moved to the altar and a ceremony to offer sacrifices to the opera masks is held. This is in keeping with the ancestral tradition of worshipping the land god.

The opera has a long history. According to *The Annals of Chizhou* written in the Ming Dynasty some 460 years ago, from the 13th to the 16th day of the first lunar month, the land god was greeted into all the households, as people staged various performances amidst the sonorous beating of gongs and drums. Studies have proved that the Guichi Nuo Opera has a close relationship with the talk show and melody singing during the Chinghua reign (1465-87) of the Ming Dynasty. Today, the Nuo opera in Guichi maintains many of the programmes and performing features of the Song- and Yuan-dynasty operas. This feature makes the opera a living specimen for the further study to the history of operas in China and the relationship between operas, and ballad singing in southern China.

The Nuo Dance, usually performed before and after an opera, is also worthy of attention. The Umbrella Dance, for example, is developed from a dance existing before the Qin Dynasty (221-207 B.C.) more than 2,000 years ago. Another dance is based on a lost form of dance in which two ethnic minority people drink as they dance. While they become very drunk, their movements are all the more charming and interesting. The dance is a legacy of the cultural exchanges between China and its neighbours during the Jin (265-420) to the Tang (618-907) periods. The dance Catching the Red Bird reflects the ancient culture of the State of Chu of the Warring Period (475-221 B.C.). Examples such as these abound. 

Translated by F. Huang



1. The ancient and uninhibited Nuo Dance is also known as mime opera.
2. Masks of Nuo Opera are the symbols of the Nuo gods. In an exaggerated portrayal and meticulously made, the masks display a rich variety of expressions; each represents a different character.





principles — neither would make inquiries about the progress of the other, nor would anyone divulge a secret to the other side. They would wait until the festival, when they display their own butter flowers and at the same time admire the art works from the other academy. Through this method the monk artists of the two institutions learn from each other and improve their own skills.

During their prime days, each academy had 40-50 monk artists; nowadays there are only as many as 20. These monks of different ethnic groups, Tibetan, Tu, Mongolian and Han, begin to learn the craft at the age of 12 or 13. From then on, by learning the skills from their masters and continuing to practise, they spend the rest of their lives creating butter flowers. When experienced artists grow too old to produce any further art works themselves, they work as teachers or supervisors training the young monks.

### Dedicated Spirit for the Art

Four procedures are involved in producing butter flowers: making the framework; sculpting the base; applying the colour, and mounting the finished work.

In making the framework, fragrant wood, straw and flaxen thread are used to bind a framework according to the required size and shape of the object. To make the base sculpture, the monks pound the exhibited butter flowers of the previous year into powders and spread them into an even, thin layer, which they scatter with scalding ashes of wood and grass and then roll up.

When the butter softens, they pound and knead it to remove any impurities and hard substances, making it into strong, pliable elastic

butter dough. The darkly coloured dough is pasted onto the framework to create a rough sculpture, which must be vivid and accurate in shape and rational in proportion, and must meet the requirements of the general design. In most cases, those who make the bases accomplish the next procedure, the application of colour, to complete the creation.

During the process of colour application, paints of different colours are applied to give a final touch to the face, eyebrows and

lips of the figures or the flowers, leaves, stamens or pistils. In the case of delicate works such as flowers, leaves or exquisite ornaments, the coloured parts are sculptured with coloured butter dough, which is made out of pure white butter combined with mineral pigments of different colours. In order to prevent the deformation of the art works due to melting, the



artists must work in workshops at temperatures below zero. To avoid their hands being too warm, the artists keep soaking them in a basin of water with ice blocks. They very often work with numb hands. As a result, almost every one of them suffers from arthritis to some degree, a true indication of their dedicated spirit.

In the final stage, all the finished parts of the art works are mounted on a pedestal and artistically suspended with the use of wire.

### A Four-Hour Exhibition

The First Month Prayer Service in Tar Monastery starts on the 8th day and ends on the 17th day of the first month of the lunar year.

The peak of the 10-day service occurs on the 14th and 15th days. On the morning of the 14th day, a grand ceremony with a mask dance takes place in the Sutra Debating Hall. Then early on the 15th day, there is the activity of Sunning the Buddha, followed by the Horse-head Jingang Dance at noon. The grand Butter Flower Lantern Festival is held on this same evening.

Early on the 15th day, just as the first sun light appears, all the gates of the monastery are opened wide, joss sticks and





# The Butter Flowers of Tar Monastery

Photos & article by Zhang Xizhen

Tar Monastery, located south of Lushaer of Huangzhong County, Qinghai Province, is the birthplace of Tsong Khapa, founder of the Gelug Sect of Tibetan Buddhism, and one of the six major monasteries of the sect. Built in 1560 during the Ming Dynasty, it is renowned for its magnificent complex of Buddhist halls, pagodas, scriptural chambers and monks' living quarters, built in a harmonious blend of the architectural styles of the Hans and the Tibetans. Among all its splendid features though, Tar's greatest claim to fame lies in its "three wonders" of uniquely styled Tibetan art — its frescoes, embossed embroidery and its highly celebrated butter flower sculptures. The latter, a craft involving superlative skills, is acknowledged as the unrivalled jewel of Tibetan Buddhist art.

## Academies Specialising in Butter Flower Carving

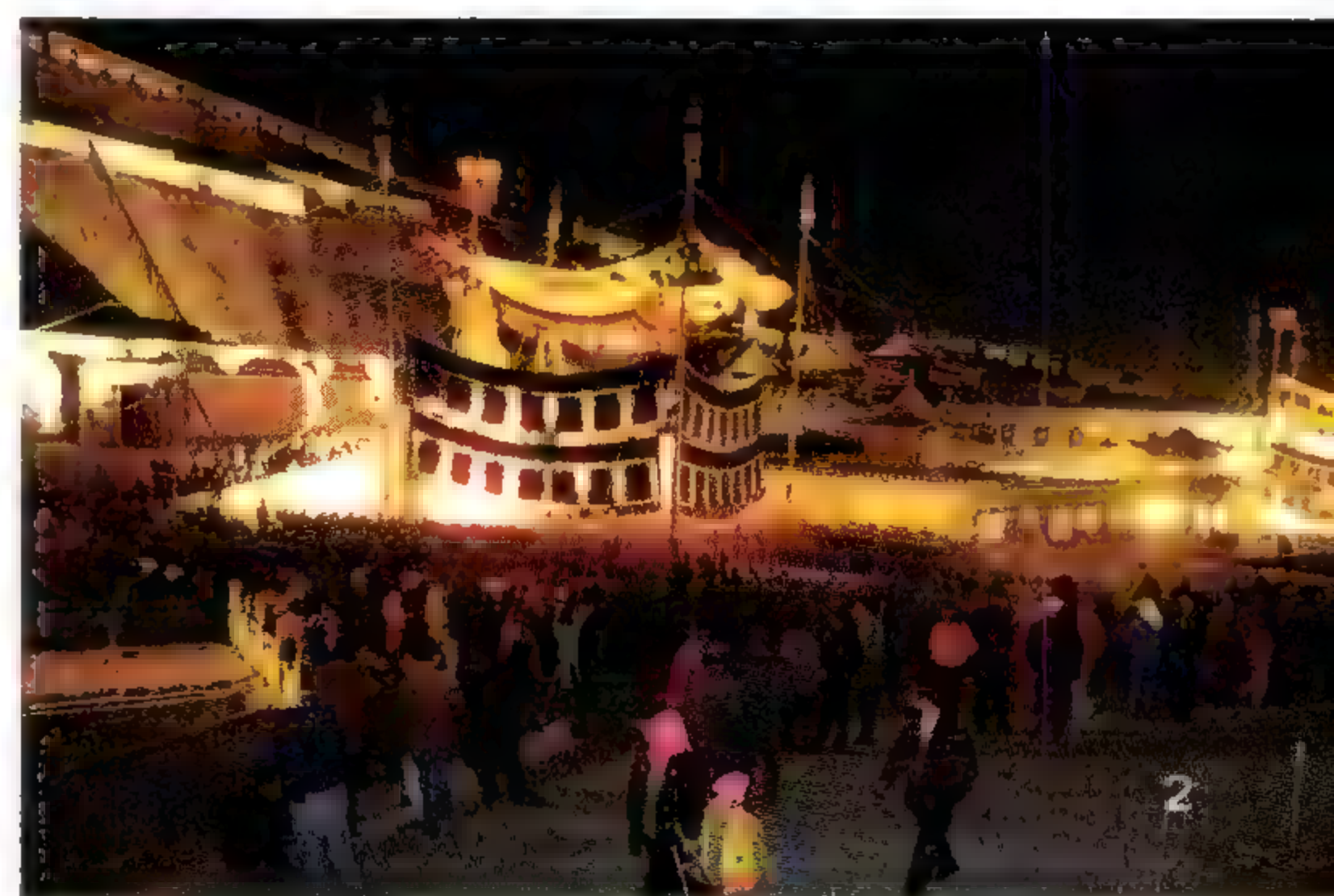
"Butter flower" is the general term for artistic works created out of butter. It is an art originated in Tibet. Legend says that when Princess Wencheng married Songtsan Gambo, the Tubo king, she took along a statue of Sakyamuni from Chang'an, the Tang capital, which was later enshrined in Jokhang Monastery. After Tsong Khapa completed his Buddhist studies in Tibet, he initiated a grand service to demonstrate his reverence for the founder of Buddhism. However, on the severely cold plateau there were no fresh flowers available, so the monks carved a flower out of butter to place before the Buddha.

The art of butter carving was further developed after it was brought to Tar Monastery. A whole variety of objects, such as Buddhist figures, birds, animals, trees, plants, pagodas and pavilions, are sculpted with butter. The larger art works, buildings, Bodhisattvas and guardians, are one or two metres high; the tiny

ones of flowers, birds, insects and fish, only three or four centimetres, are all extremely lifelike. The figures are mainly chosen from Buddhist stories and folk legends such as "The Life of Sakyamuni", "The Life of Padmasambhava", "The Story of Zuowa Sangmu", "The Story of Xiangbala", "The Tang Monk Searches Buddhist Scriptures in the West" and "Princess Wencheng Enters Tibet". In recent years, however, many works have also been created to reflect people's lives.

In Tar Monastery, there are two institutions specialising in making butter flowers: Jiezong Zengzha, or the Upper Flower Academy and Gongmang Zengzha, the Lower Flower Academy. The two academies, on an equal footing and independent of each other, contend by showing their works at the annual Butter Flower Lantern Festival.

The Butter Flower Lantern Festival is held on the 15th day of the first lunar month. But preparations in both the Upper and Lower academies begin in October. From then on, the monks work for three months to create the butter sculptures they will display at the festival. During this period, the two academies abide by specific



1. Detail of the butter flower work *The Life of Maitreya*.
2. Each of the Upper and the Lower academies builds their own tent to exhibit their art works.
3. The butter sculpture of the Water Monster.
4. The statue of Manjusri.
5. *Return in Triumph*.





# Qinhuangdao

## Training Base for Outward Bound

Photos & article  
by He Yongqing

*Over the last two years, the Outward Bound course, which aims to challenge its participants both at the personal level and in the development of team spirit, has been quietly slipping into China. As the photographer for a training team, I went to Qinhuangdao, a famous tourist centre in Hebei Province, and took part in a two-day course. Not only did I take many photos to illustrate the process of the stimulating and challenging training, but I also personally took part in this new and unforgettable test....*

1. Crossing the high broken bridge is particularly difficult for Yang Qing who is terrified of heights.

2. Climbing up the wall barehanded requires strength, but more importantly, it needs the co-operation of the whole team and elaborate planning.

On the evening of August 28, 2000, I sat together with the other 17 members of the Outward Bound team in the Qinhuangdao Customs School. None of us knew each other. The coach Bai Fengchuan soon dealt with this by asking us to introduce ourselves in turn and to relate the most unforgettable incident each of us had experienced. We were a group of ardent young 20-something, so the atmosphere was buzzing in no time.

Then, the coach asked us to think of a title, an emblem and an anthem for our team. We all racked our brains for suggestions. After some discussion, we decided to name our team "Dream of the Wind", and for our anthem, the dancer Fan Jinxiu cleverly borrowed the music from the modern ballet drama, *The Red Detachment of Women*, and wrote new words for it. Thus the team Dream of the Wind was formally established.

### The Sky Ladder Brings Tears and Laughter

The next day, all the team members put on the camouflage uniform and prepared to start training. But when we arrived at the training ground, we all got a nasty shock. Before us, five timber logs, about 40 centimetres in diameter and five metres in length, were suspended in mid-air 1.6 metres apart. They swayed in the wind like a giant rope ladder dropped from a helicopter. Coach Bai gave the order: two persons, a male and a female, were to climb in co-operation to the top of the sky ladder as quickly as they could! This was too tall an order for those of us who usually worked in an office sitting at meetings or drafting documents. It was tantamount to climbing the sky! What should we do then? Finally, Shen Kuan and the female vocalist, Yang Qing, volunteered to take the lead.





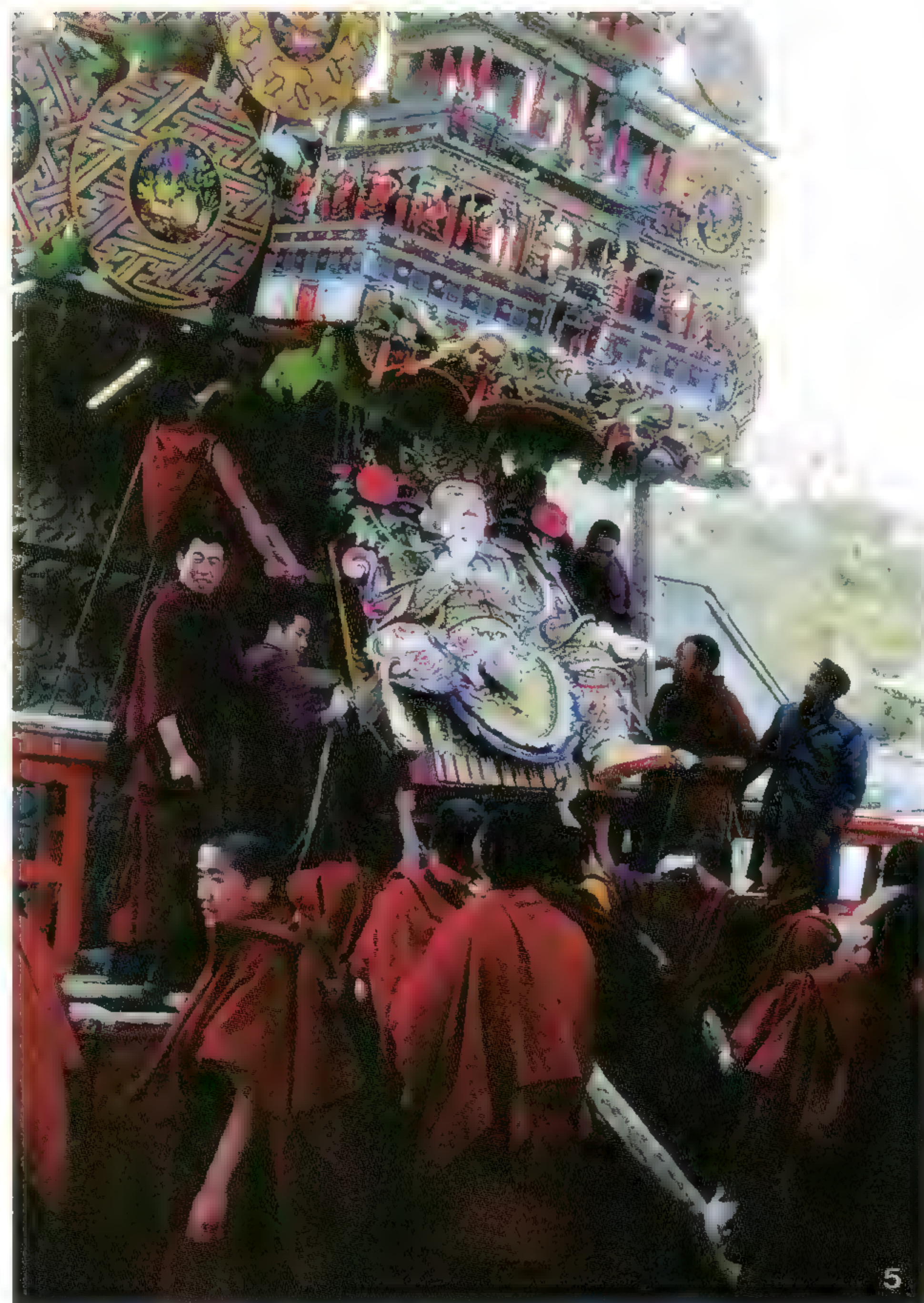


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candles are burned, and pious believers arrive in an endless stream. At about 7 a.m., when the rays of the morning sun begin to bathe the land, the beat of drums and gongs and the boom of long bugles fill the air; monks begin to chant scriptures and devout Buddhists flow into the halls. At 8:30, the morning chanting fades away, and the monk artists begin their task of building the tent for the butter flower exhibition.

The Upper Flower Academy build their tent south of the Sutra-Debating Hall, while 100 metres away, east of the hall, the Lower Flower Academy, build theirs. Each tent is 1,000 metres in girth and 15 metres high, decorated with exquisite embossed embroideries and silk drapes on three sides. The tent is divided into three layers inside. On the highest layer hangs a huge round top of many folds, symbolising the sky. The western side of the tent is open for displaying the butter flower exhibits. In the centre sits a 2.2-metre butter statue of Buddha. A grand incarnation ceremony is held before it is exhibited. A bronze mirror, a basin, and a silver pot planted with peacock feathers are placed in front of the statue, and amidst the chanting of scriptures, several monks begin to sprinkle holy water and scatter the five cereals onto the statue. Meanwhile, a monk artist adds the pupils to the eyes. Once the statue is given sight, it becomes Buddha and is ready to receive the homage of its worshippers, offering them protection in return.

At dusk the monks on duty begin to disperse the day visitors to make the site ready for the butter flower exhibition. After sunset the monk artists remove their butter flowers to the yard and splash cold water over them, cooling them to avoid melting and deformation and



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removing the dust to keep them bright and clean. Then the butter flowers are briskly carried to the tent.

When night falls, the butter lamps are lit. In the shimmering light and amidst Buddhist music, thousands of Buddhist believers and visitors enter the tents to pay homage to the Buddha and enjoy the art works. Because the display lasts for only four hours, it is limited to only two or three minutes for each visitor. After midnight, the exhibition tents are dismantled and the butter flowers are removed to the exhibition hall inside the monastery.

*Translated by Xiong Zhenru*

1. Making the base sculpture.
2. Giving their art works a final touch, using paints and coloured butter.
3. The master and his apprentice working together.
4. Monk artists of the Upper Flower Academy.
5. Mounting the finished parts on a pedestal, using fine wire.
6. Tar Monastery, one of the six major monasteries of the Gelug Sect.

### Tips for the Traveller

- **Climate** Xining is located at an altitude of 2,261 metres. It is bitterly cold in winter, with an average temperature of -9°C in January. Warm clothes must be taken along.
- **Transport** Flights are available from many Chinese cities to Xining. Buses set off from the West Gate of Xining to Tar Monastery, leaving every 30 minutes. Taxis are always available.
- **Accommodation** Xining Hotel: Add: Jianguo Road, Xining; Tel: (71) 814 9995; Standard room: 50-80 yuan.







Unfortunately, the good times did not last long. We had been bustling about in the forest of locust trees for about half an hour, when some problems cropped up. Little Yang Qing, who had been leaping about a moment before, began moaning and groaning. Having forgotten to heed the coach's warning to walk at an even speed, she was now beside herself, writhing about and streaming with sweat. The wounds on her arms scratched by the thorny locust branches and stung by caterpillars became severely irritated by perspiration. Luckily, team member Shi Lili came to her rescue with some cooling ointment she had brought from home. After a short while, Yang Qing was all smiles and laughter again.

### Disoriented in the Boundless Sea of Sand

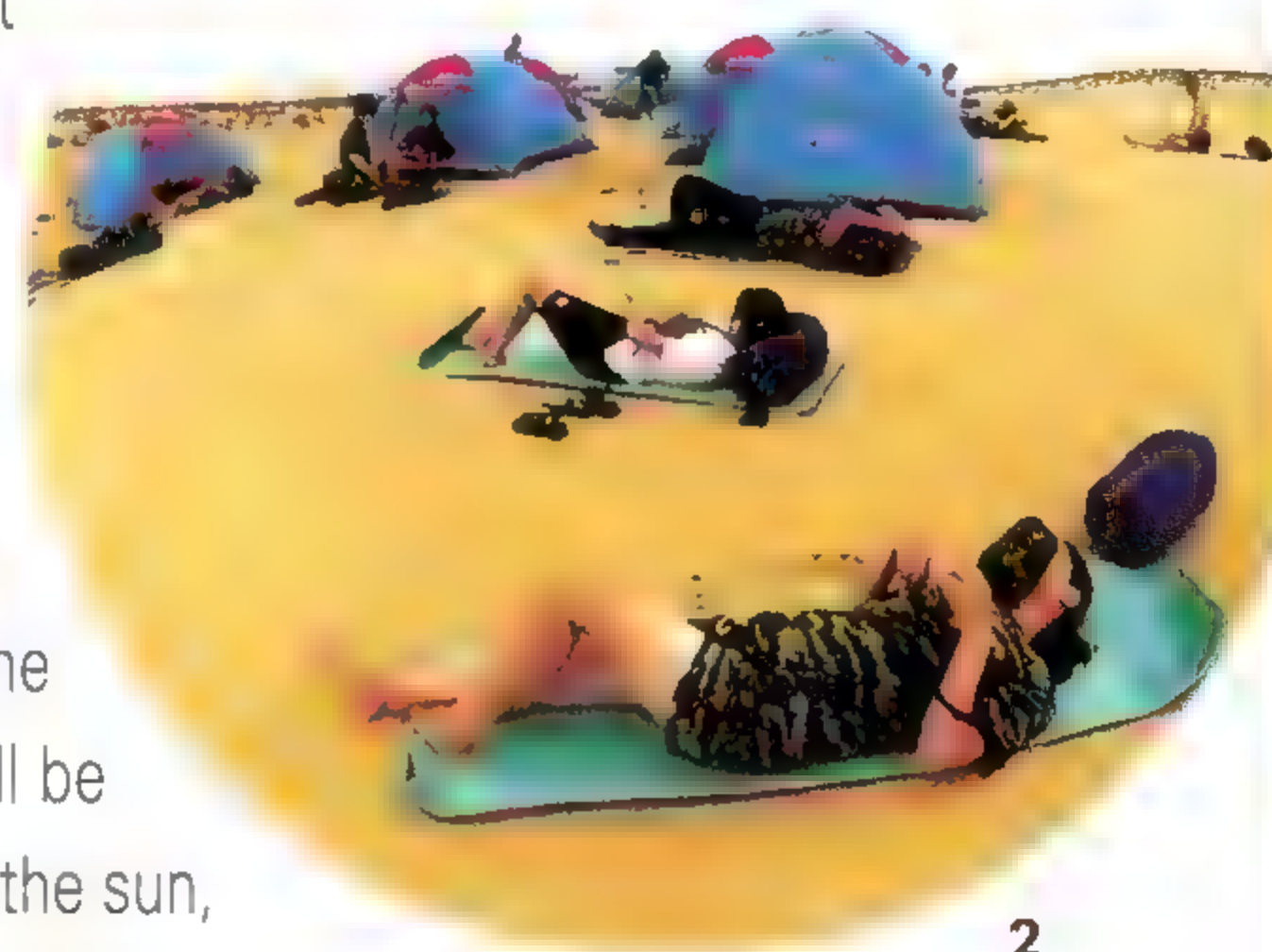
1. Wading through the tall grass.
2. A great reward — lying down on the soft sand and having a good sleep after the long, hard journey.
3. Working together to rig up the tents in the desert.
4. It is more comfortable to walk in the sand barefoot.

Finally, the team was out of the forest of locust trees after walking in it for more than an hour. Delighted with ourselves, we threw our caps, walking sticks and everything in our hands into the air to celebrate our victory. But Fang Jiaquan, the team leader, became puzzled; facing the boundless sea of sand, he did not know which direction to take. We all turned our eyes to Coach Bai, but he just smiled in silence. We looked at each other, not knowing what to do.

Then Yang Qing reminded us, "Do you remember our coach telling us to plant a stick in the ground? Draw a line along its shadow, and another one after half an hour; the vertical line on the line linking the two shadows will be facing north. Or you reduce the time on your wrist watch by half to point to the sun, and the direction of 12 o'clock is the north." Heartened by her remarks, we all looked up to see where the sun was, but the sky was covered with dark clouds and it seemed about to rain. We were all disappointed. A moment later, Wang Haitao, another team member, came up with a new idea, saying, "The wind from the sea in the east has blown the sand into a range of dunes. If we go along the ridges of the dunes, we must be heading south." Finding his suggestion logical, we ran together to the sand range lying endlessly ahead of us.

On the sand dunes, we found it easier and more comfortable to walk barefoot. So every one of us took off our shoes and socks to let our feet enjoy the comforts granted by nature. But after we had been walking for a while, it began to drizzle, so we quickened our pace and started to sing the anthem of our team: "March on, march on! To scale new heights, let's unite and march on. Our physique is powerful and our will strong. With the dream of the wind, we march on toward nature." Our voices reverberated in the sea of sand and drifted far, far away....

After trudging for nearly four hours, we finally reached our destination. The coach had already arranged to have the tents transported there. By helping each other, we erected them hastily and lay down on the soft sand. When everyone else was resting, I searched for the right angles to fully capture the scene with my camera.



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The tall and robust Shen Kuan pushed the petite Yang Qing up to the first bar. She stood on her toes, desperately grasping hold of the second bar, and as the ladder swayed to and fro, she became so petrified that she burst into tears and refused to climb another inch, no matter what the others said to encourage her. Then we remembered the story she had told us the previous evening about her fear of heights. It happened when CCTV was featuring her in a music video. She was asked to sing a song standing on top of a huge rock by the sea. But as she climbed up onto the rock, her two legs began to tremble with fear. Consequently, she had to sit on the rock and finish the song in tears.

The team members were all of one mind — not to let Yang fail at the very start. So, standing below her, we shouted at the top of our lungs to cheer her and Shen Kuan on. With our encouragement, Yang Qing ascended inch by inch among fear and tears. Strange to say, when they were about to reach the last bar, Shen Kuan was exhausted and wanted to give up, but Yang Qing became spirited and drew him up until they finally succeeded. When Yang returned to the ground, her face covered in tears, the others all rushed over to comfort her. As she wiped the tears away, she broke into a confident, mischievous laugh.

Yang's success greatly encouraged the other team members. The next two to face the challenge were Fan Jinxiu, a dancer, and Ji Haisong, the deputy general manager of the Qinhuangdao Urban Construction Department. Fan, 1.7-metre tall, had the advantage of two dexterous dancing feet, which could be placed in any position. But when she reached the second bar, her two feet being high above the ground and her entire body beginning to sway in mid-air, she, too, became gripped by fear and the tears flowed. Perhaps the unique courage of a dancer came into play, because she finally reached the top of the ladder together with Ji.

The two triumphant pairs set a fine example for the rest of us. We all did our utmost to fulfil the task and revelled in our success. At the time, I remembered the old saying, "When a man and a woman work together, tiredness is driven away." Perhaps this was why the coach had arranged the male and female team members in pairs.

Once we had conquered the first round, we were ready for the next challenges of crossing the broken bridge and performing on the horizontal bar in mid air.



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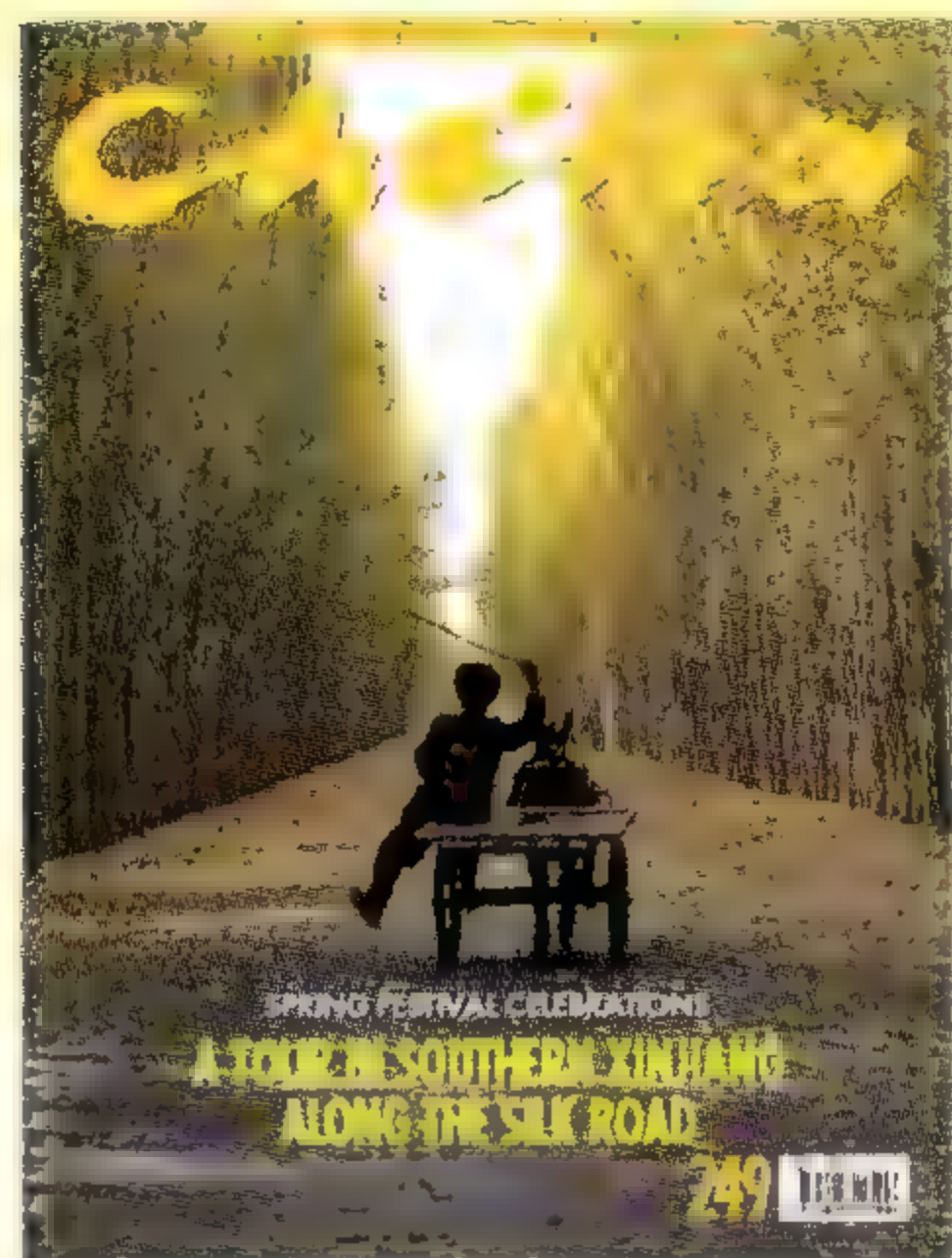
### The Forest of Locust Trees

After breakfast the next morning, a bus carried us to Qilihai in Changli County, a place called "The Great Desert in the East of Beijing". When Coach Bai asked the driver to let us off in a boundless forest of locust trees, all the team members were wildly excited. Although we were all from Qinhuangdao, this place was not conveniently located and none of us had ever set foot there before. Walking in the soft fine sand and bathing in the sea breeze, we all felt carefree and high spirited. We leapt around laughing and kidding one another, throwing ourselves into the embrace of nature, completely free of the prospect of honour or disgrace. The tension and fear we had been through with the sky ladder and the broken bridge the day before were gone without a trace.

3. In turn, team members climb up onto the high stand and fall down backwards, while the other team members combine their efforts to catch the falling body.
4. Climbing the swaying ladder is no easier than climbing up to the sky.
5. Climbing the sky ladder — a petrifying task.
6. The encouragement of fellow team members is a great inspiration for the challenger.







# Readership Survey

*China Tourism* always appreciates feedback from its readers. In accordance with your suggestions, we have recently added a variety of new columns. Still, we need to know more of your opinions, including criticisms and suggestions. Please take a couple of minutes to complete this questionnaire and return it to us. Thank you!

**Please give your evaluation of the stories in this issue and your overall impression of *China Tourism*.**

	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
Travelling Southern Xinjiang	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vibrant Spring Festival Celebrations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shengsi Islands and Seascapes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wangwu Mountain in Spring Snow	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wutai Mountain's Temple of Buddha's Aura	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Others: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
Photographs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cover	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Articles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Traveller's Tips	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Art Design	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Opinions: _____					

Name:(Mr/Ms) \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Country: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of trips to China in the last 5 years: \_\_\_\_\_

## Where (how) did you first see *China Tourism*?

☐ Subscription ☐ Newsstand or bookstore

☐ Hotel Name: \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Others \_\_\_\_\_

## Main purpose for reading *China Tourism*?

☐ Planning trips ☐ General interest in China's customs, scenery, etc. ☐ Business

☐ Tourist Trade purposes ☐ Others \_\_\_\_\_

## What do you like most about *China Tourism*?

\_\_\_\_\_

Are you happy with the factual contents of *China Tourism*? ☐ Yes ☐ No

## What are your suggestions for improvement?

\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire. It provides us with invaluable feedback which will help us improve *China Tourism* magazine for you.

\*Please mail this questionnaire to our office at 24/F, Westlands Centre, 20 Westlands Road, Quarry Bay, Hong Kong, or fax to (852) 2561 8196.





## Making Rafts for Rescue Operations

After a short rest, the team members regained their strength and became lively again. By then the dark clouds had dispersed, and the red sun was showing its smiling face. In the afternoon we went to the beach, where the coach had prepared all kinds of tools for making rafts. Our next course was to learn how to make rafts for rescue operations. Lu Baoqing and Liu

5. Putting the successfully-built raft to the test.
6. Joint efforts are the only way to success.

Feng, who loved to do fishing, displayed their skills by applying the method they used to tie fishhooks. Using their method, a raft was made before long. When it was put into the water, it really worked. Jumping onto the raft one after the other, the team took up the oars. The 300-metre long safety rope the coach had tied to the raft soon straightened out. For fear of getting my camera wet, I didn't go aboard the raft. I just stood on the shore taking photos of the rowers' smiling faces with my zoom lens....

The two-day training course soon came to an end. My participation in the course had convinced me that the strength of unity was so powerful it could surmount any difficulty. All the members of the team became close comrades-in-arms through thick and thin and came out with an unforgettable episode of experiences.

*Translated by Xiong Zhenru*



## Guide to the Qinhuangdao Outward Bound Course

### Aim

To tap personal potential and cultivate team spirit.

### Courses

Ground, field and aquatic training courses and some relevant indoor training courses.

### Details

Groups of 20 or more are accepted. Training time ranges from a minimum of two days to a maximum of six days. People from both home and abroad can apply.

### Charges

1. Training courses: around 300 yuan per person per day.
2. Accommodation: about 200 yuan per person per day.

### Time

The best season to take the course is from May to October. Outdoor courses can be conducted at any time except on stormy days.

### Contact

Qinhuangdao Outward Bound Base.

Tel: Coach Bai Fengchuan: 13803380822; Coach Zhao Shubo: 13011969678.

**Note:** There are similar Outward Bound courses in Hong Kong. Those interested in Outward Bound can contact Hong Kong Outward Bound School. Tel: 2792 4333, Fax: 2792 9877. Website: <http://www.outwardboundhk.org>

## A Brief Introduction to Qinhuangdao

Qinhuangdao is located on the Bohai Sea in the northeastern part of Hebei Province, about 300 km from Beijing. Close to it are the famous summer resort Beidaihe and Shanhaiguan, where the Great Wall begins in the sea and winds up into the mountains. The city of Qinhuangdao has three special attributes: Feicui Island, the Great Qindao Desert and Mount Zushan with the sea. Yanso Lake. Qinhuangdao has four distinct seasons in the year. The highest temperature is below 30°C in summer, making it an ideal summer resort.

## Transport

It is very convenient to get to Qinhuangdao from Beijing or Tianjin. It takes about three hours by train and two and a half hours by bus from Beijing to Qinhuangdao. It can also be reached by plane from Beijing or Tianjin.

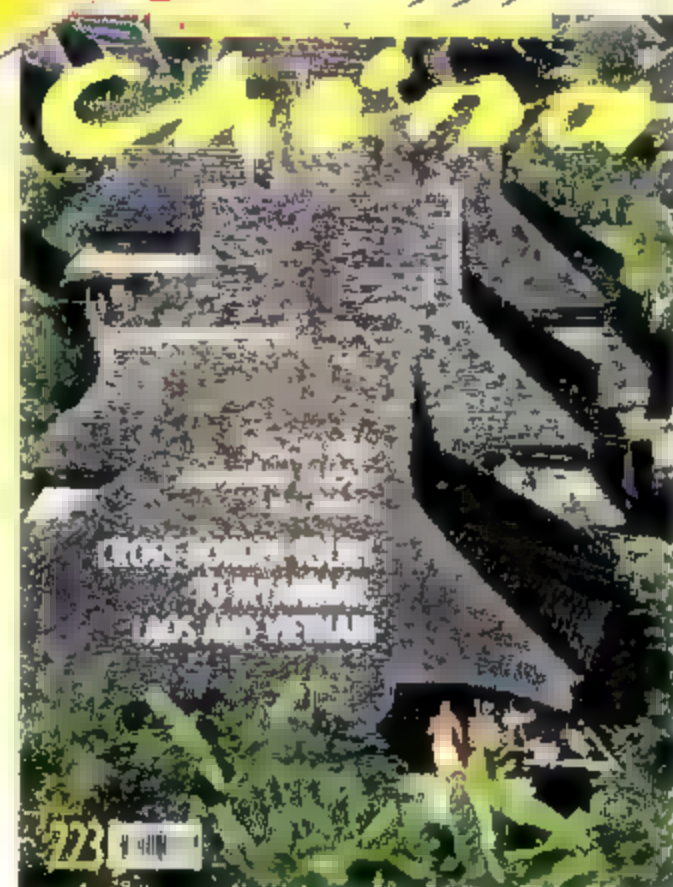


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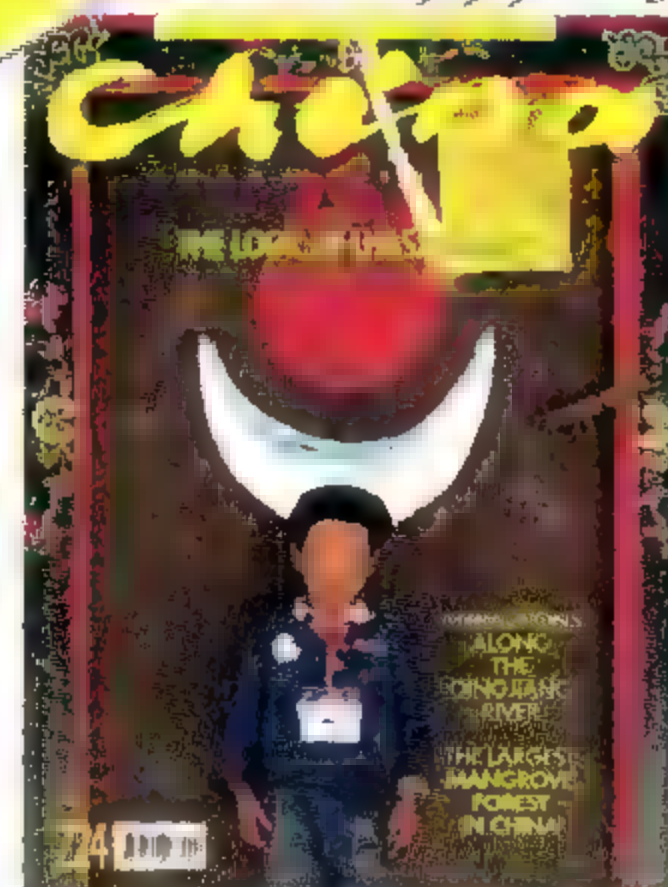
- ◆ Mount Putuo: A Female Bodhisattva's Domain
- ◆ Bird-Watching Across China
- ◆ Where Are the Lop People?

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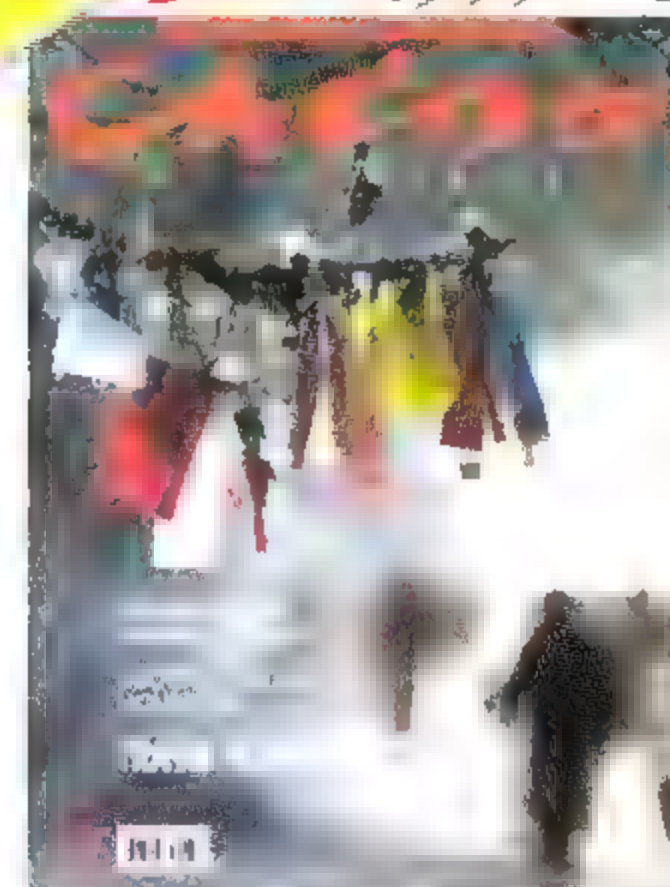
- ◆ Cross-Border Tours to Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam
- ◆ Places for Admiring Snow in China

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- ◆ The Look of Lhasa Today
- ◆ Attractions Along the Qingjiang River
- ◆ The Largest Mangrove Forest in China

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- ◆ Travel Routes in Tibet
- ◆ China's Major Ceramic Centres
- ◆ Grottoes on Maiji Mountain

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- ◆ Travel Along the Jinhua-Wenzhou Railway in Zhejiang
- ◆ Sertar: A Buddhist Land of 3,000 Women

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- ◆ Flowering Season of Southern Gansu
- ◆ Ancient Villages in Wuyuan, Jiangxi
- ◆ Eating in Chengdu

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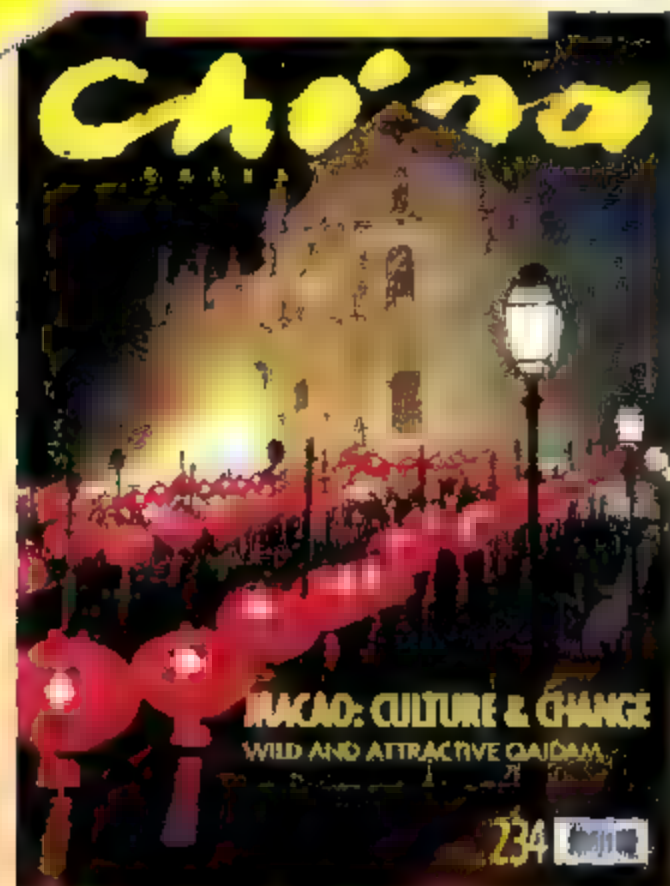
- ◆ Touring the Three Gorges from the Air, Water, and Land
- ◆ Highlights of Wuhan
- ◆ Summer Escapes in Chongqing

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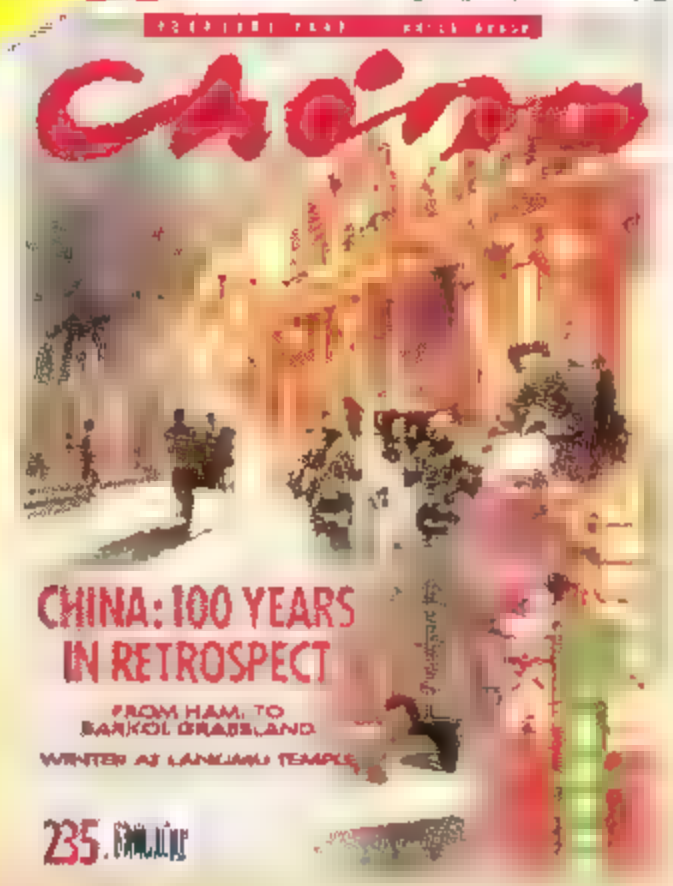
- ◆ Unique Landscapes of Guizhou
- ◆ Earth Forests and Castles in Tibet
- ◆ Visit the Yellow River at Sanmenxia
- ◆ Nightlife of Xiamen

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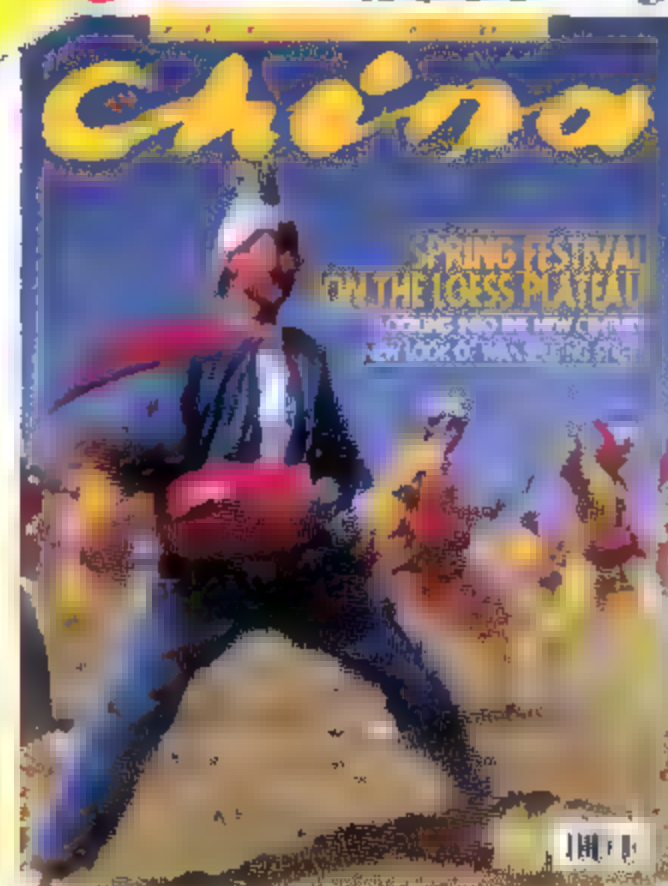
- ◆ Macao: Culture & Change
- ◆ Wild and Attractive Qaidam

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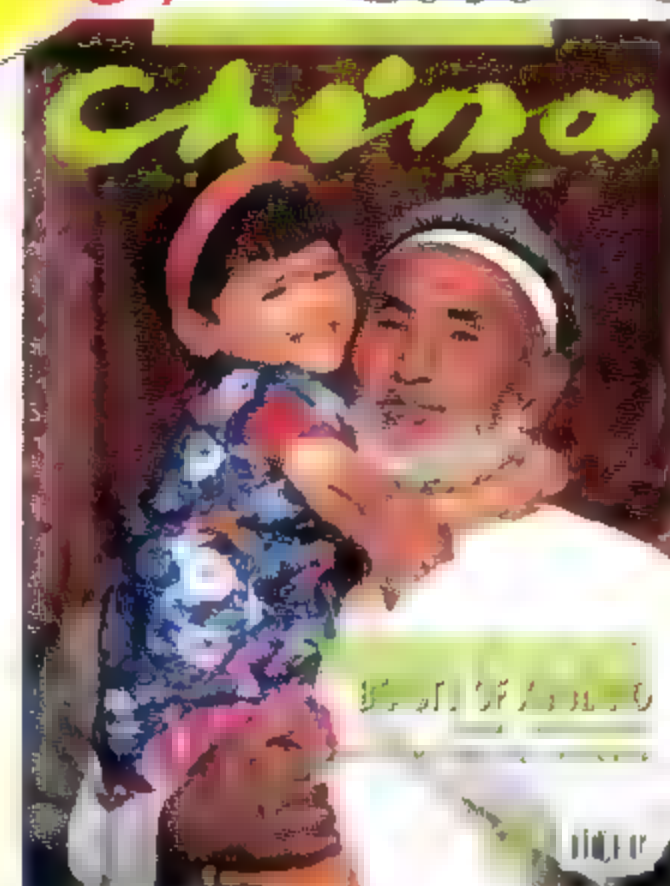
- ◆ China: 100 Years in Retrospect
- ◆ From Hami to Barkol Grassland
- ◆ Winter at Langmu Temple

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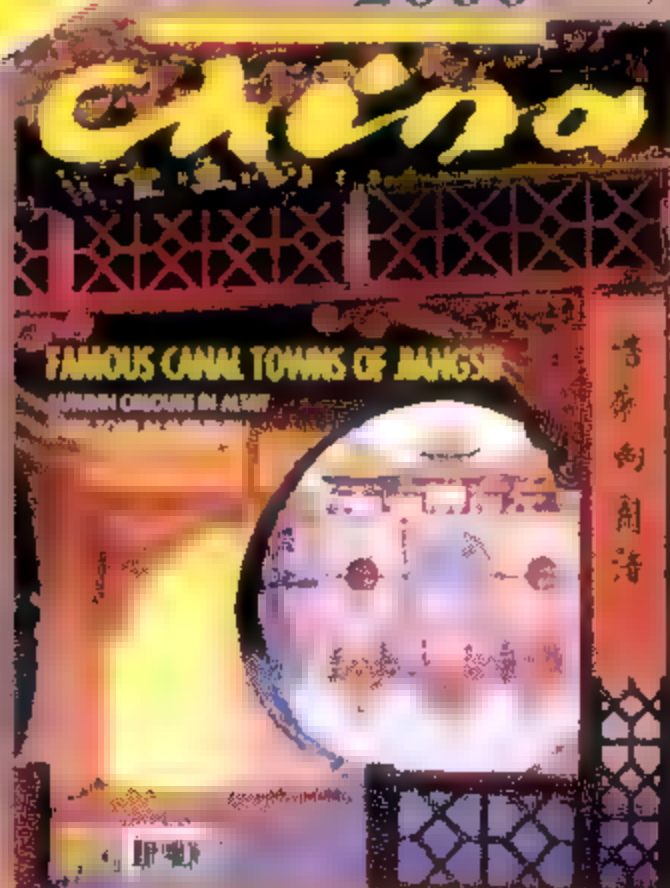
- ◆ Spring Festival on the Loess Plateau
- ◆ Looking into the New Century
- ◆ New Look of Wangfujing Street

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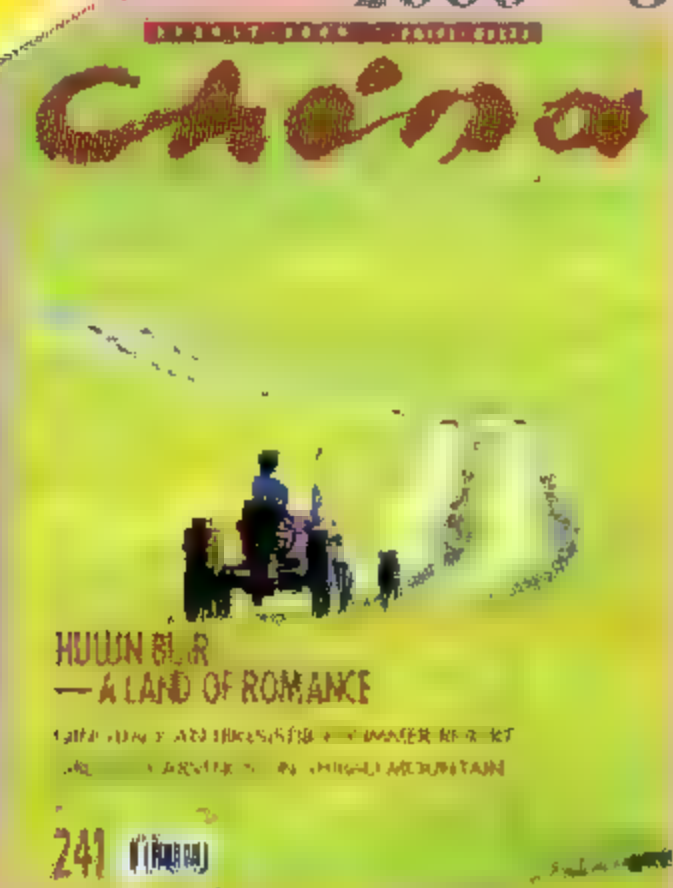
- ◆ Tianshan Mountains: Beauty of Xinjiang
- ◆ Zigong: Capital of Salt
- ◆ A Pilgrimage to Mt. Bonri and Lake Dangra

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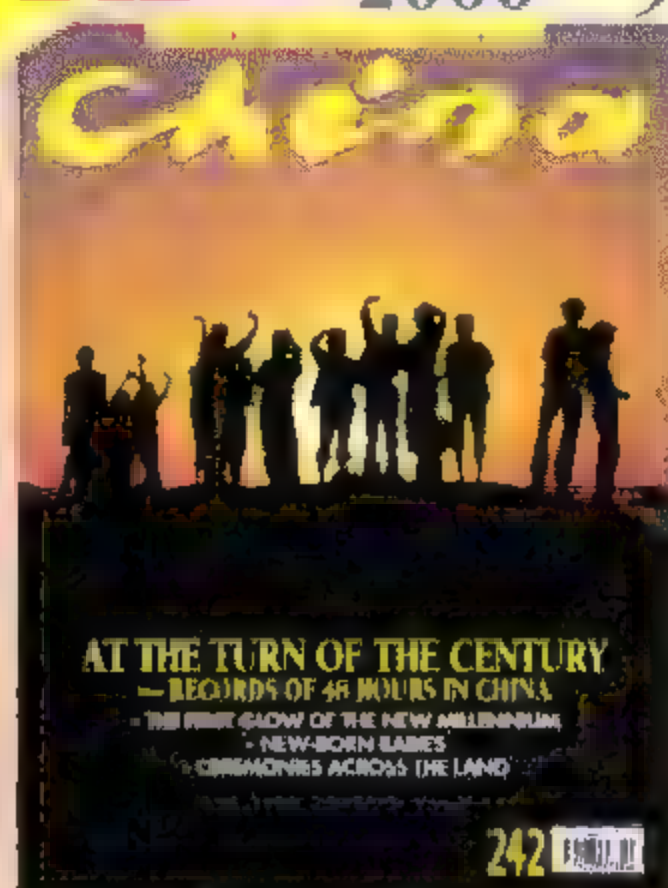
- ◆ Famous Canal Towns of Jiangsu
- ◆ Autumn Colours in Altay
- ◆ Taste Tour in Shenzhen

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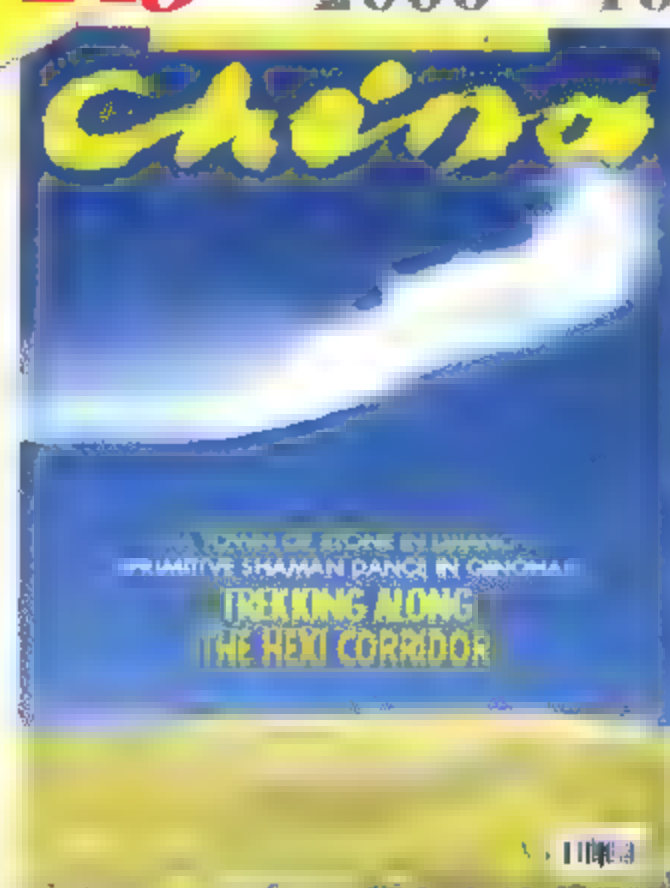
- ◆ Hulun Buir — a Land of Romance
- ◆ Qingdao: An Irresistible Summer Resort
- ◆ Grotto Carvings on Shibao Mountain

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- ◆ At the Turn of the Century — Records of 48 Hours in China
- ◆ The First Glow of the New Millennium

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- ◆ Trekking Along the Hexi Corridor
- ◆ A Town of Stone in Lijiang
- ◆ Primitive Shaman Dance in Qinghai





- The **Jiaodong Peninsula** in east Shandong Province is located between the Yellow Sea and the Bohai Sea. In the "Feature Story", our correspondent exposes you to some fascinating spots on the tip of the peninsula. Penglai Tower has been described as the site from where the Chinese fairy-story characters, the Eight Immortals, cross the sea; Liugong Island witnessed the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95); Shidao is China's largest fishing harbour, and **Yantai** and **Weihai** are among China's fastest developing cities. Looking beyond its physical features, however, what may impress you most is the spirit of the Shandong people, who are striving for a better future in the new trend of modernisation.
- Tibetans are famous for their unique religious rituals to express their devout belief in Buddhism. Besides

worshipping in temples, they also make pilgrimages to circle their holy mountains and lakes, believing that by doing this, they and their families can be blessed. Soon after the autumn harvest, a team of Tibetans, male and female, old and young, set off to circle the **Mainri Snow Mountain** situated in northwestern Yunnan Province. We invite you to follow their extraordinary pilgrimage in "On the Way".

- For your spring break, we offer a selection of places to go. In **Guangzhou**, capital of Guangdong Province, you can visit Shamian, an area with Continental architecture; in **Kaohsiung** (Gaoxiong), Taiwan, you can enjoy the view and the bustle of a prosperous port; in **Xiamen**, a charming seaside city in Fujian Province, you just relax and indulge in local flavours.

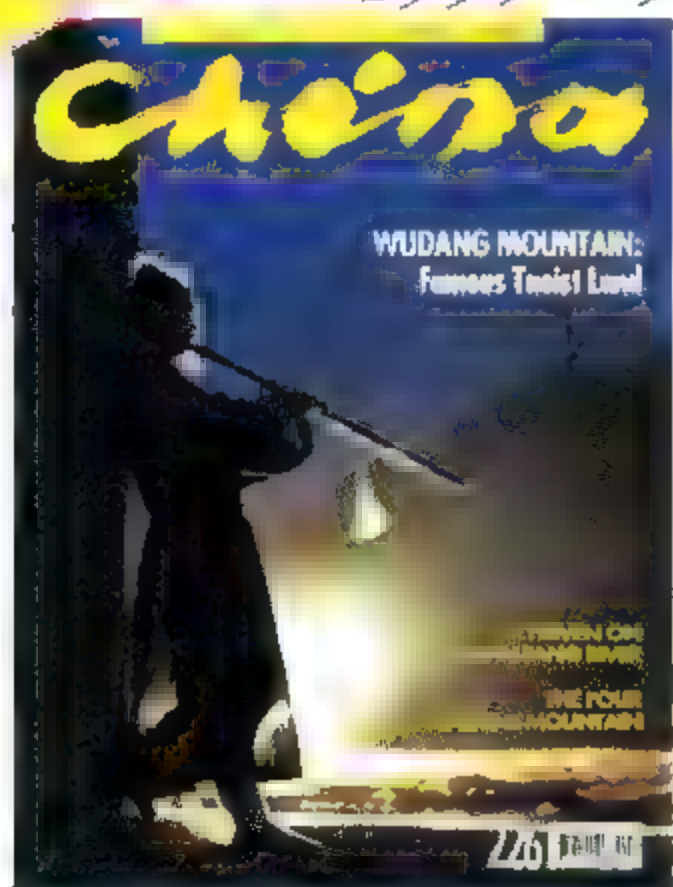


Hotels in **Xinjiang**

City	Name	Star	Address	Tel	Fax
Urümqi	Holiday Inn Urümqi	****	168 Xinhua Rd N, Urümqi	(991) 2818788	(991) 2817422
	Xinjiang Electric Power Hotel	***	57 Minzhu Rd, Urümqi	(991) 2822911	(991) 2826031
	Islam Grand Hotel Urümqi	***	22 Zhongshan Rd, Urümqi	(991) 2811017	(991) 2811513
	Laiyuan Hotel Urümqi	***	3 Jianshe Rd, Urümqi	(991) 2828368	(991)2825109
	Xinjiang Hotel	**	107 Changjiang Rd, Urümqi	(991) 5852511	(991) 5811354
	Friendship Hotel Urümqi	**	62 Yan'an Rd N, Urümqi	(991) 2864222	(991) 2863573
Hotan	Hotan Hotel	**	10 Pesitan Rd S, Hotan	(903) 2023566	(903) 2023570
	Hotan Guesthouse		4 Tanaiyi Rd N, Hotan	(903) 2022824	
	Hotan City Hotel		11 Laoerbage Rd W, Hotan	(903) 2026101	(903) 2026101
Minfeng	Minfeng Niya Hotel		Minfeng	(903) 6750034	
Turpan	Turpan Hotel	**	Qingnian Rd, Turpan	(995) 8522025	(995) 8523262
	Turpan Oasis Hotel	**	41 Qingnian Rd, Turpan	(995) 8522491	(995) 8522768
Korla	Bayinguoleng Hotel	***	Renmin Rd E, Korla	(996) 2022248	(996) 2022247
	Loulan Hotel	**	Renmin Rd E, Korla	(996) 2024588	(996) 2024788
	Bosten Hotel	*	Renmin Rd W, Korla	(996) 2022007	(996) 2024103
Aksu	Aksu Friendship Hotel	**	65 Yingbin Rd, Aksu	(997) 2513043	(997) 2513511
	Aksu Guesthouse	**	39 Xiaonan St, Aksu	(997) 2124148	(997) 2123340
	Aksu Hotel		9 Xinhua Rd W, Aksu	(997) 2123366	
Kuqa	Guizi Hotel	**	93 Tianshan Rd, Kuqa	(997) 7122005	(997) 7122524
	Jiaotong Hotel	*	Tianshan Rd, Kuqa	(997) 7122682	
	Tongda Hotel		154 Tianshan Rd E, Kuqa	(997) 7122539	
	Kuqa Hotel		76 Jiefang Rd, Kuqa	(997) 7122901	
	Kuqa Hotel (branch)		23 Shengli Rd, Kuqa	(997) 7122844	
Kashi	Seman Hotel	**	337 Seman Rd, Kashi	(998) 2822060	(998) 2822861
	Qiniwake Hotel	**	144 Seman Rd, Kashi	(998) 2842299	(998) 2823842
	Kashgar Guesthouse	**	57 Tawuguzi Rd, Kashi	(998) 2614954	(998) 2614679
	Huaqiao Hotel		376 Seman Rd, Kashi	(998) 2833262	(998) 2822459

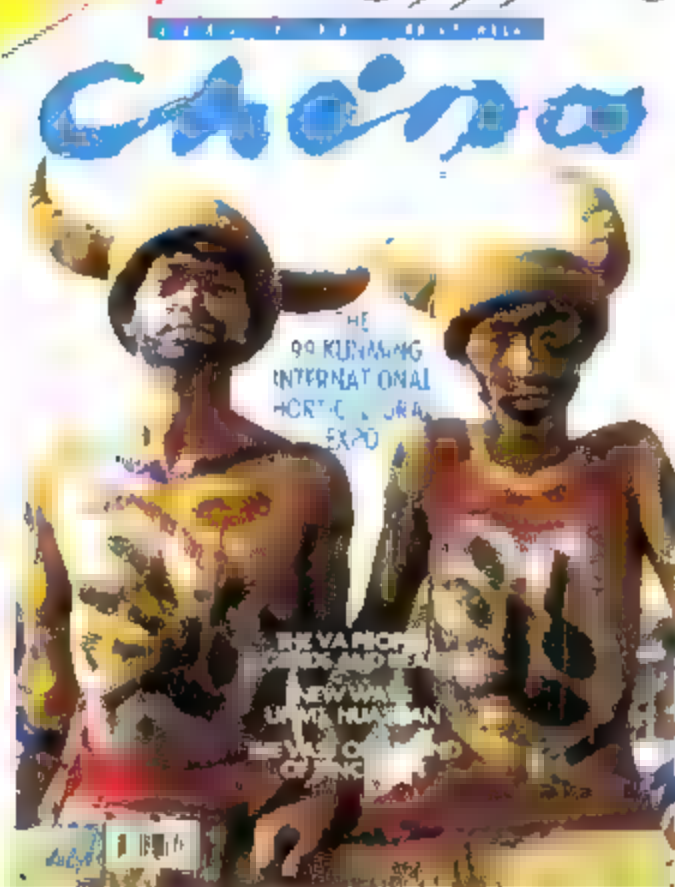


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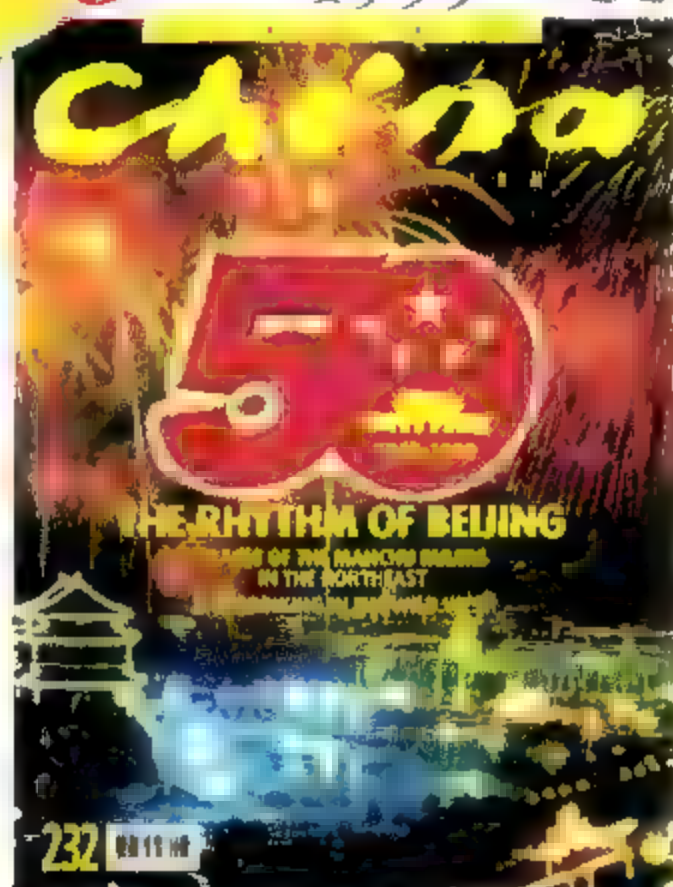
- ♦ Wudang Mountain: Famous Taoist Land
- ♦ A Haven on the Yuanjiang River
- ♦ The Four Maidens Mountain

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- ♦ The '99 Kunming International Horticultural Expo
- ♦ The Va People: Legends and Reality
- ♦ New Ways Up Mt. Huashan
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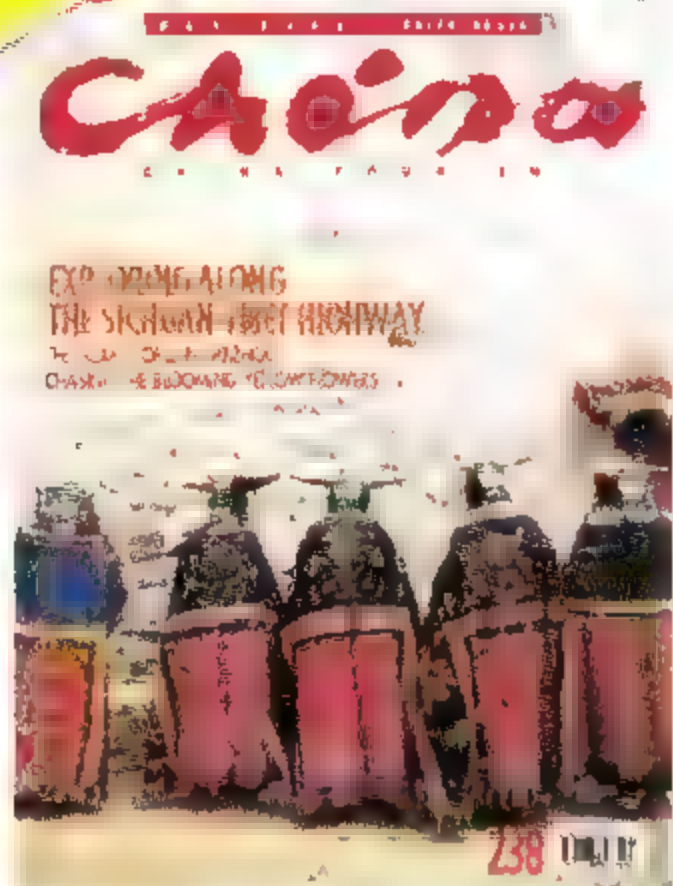
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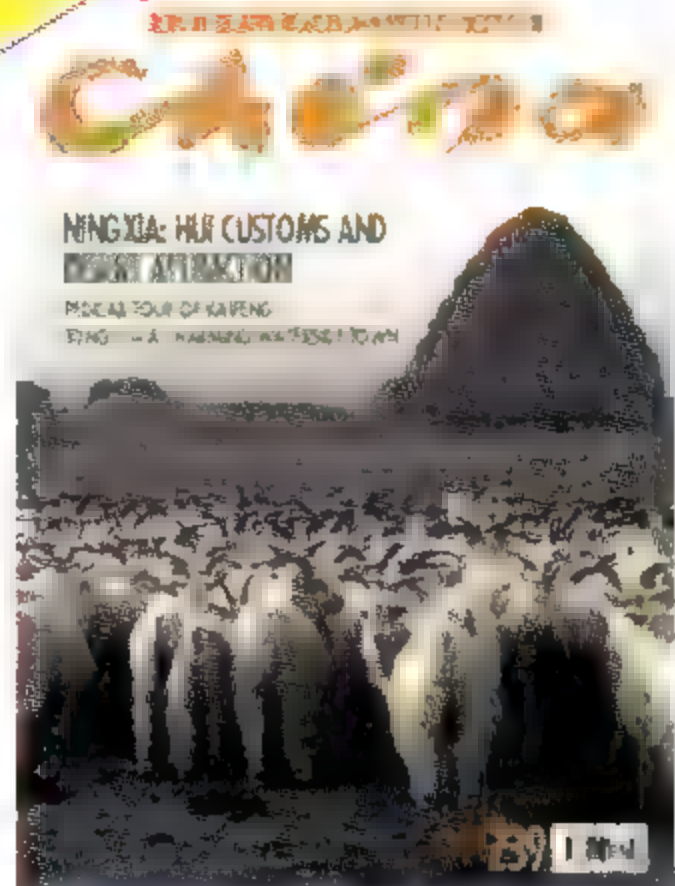
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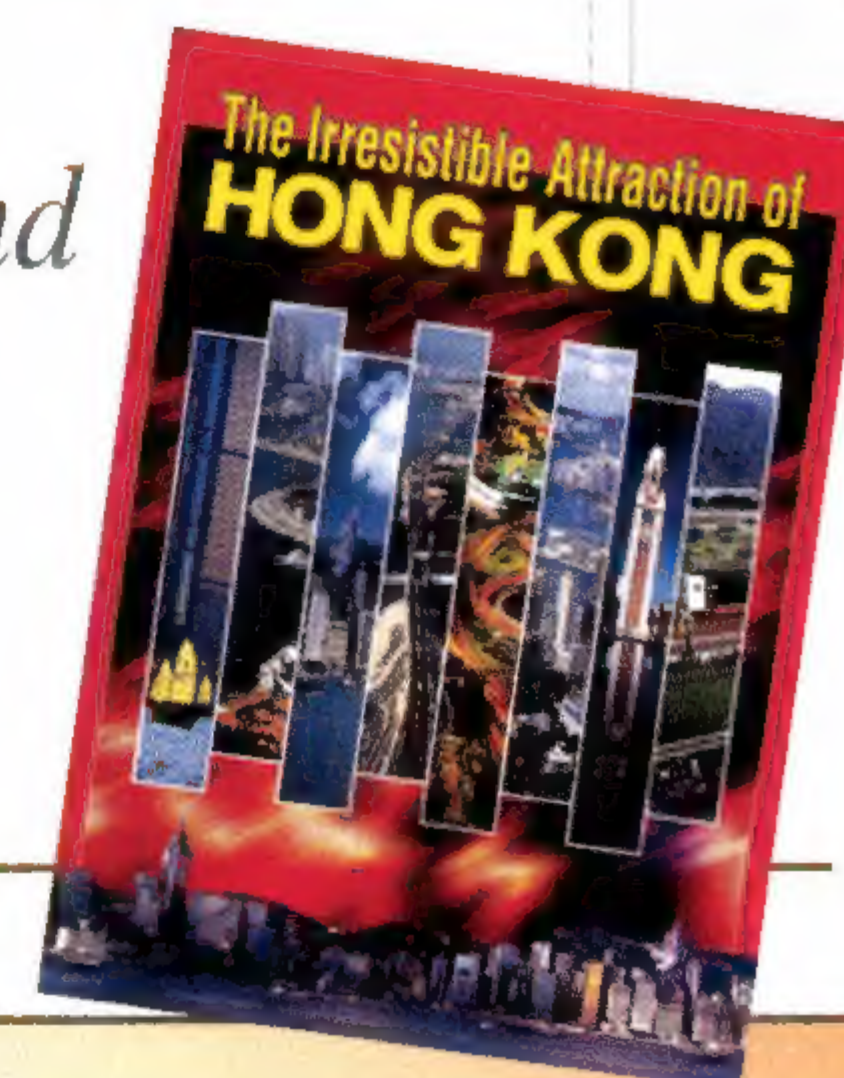
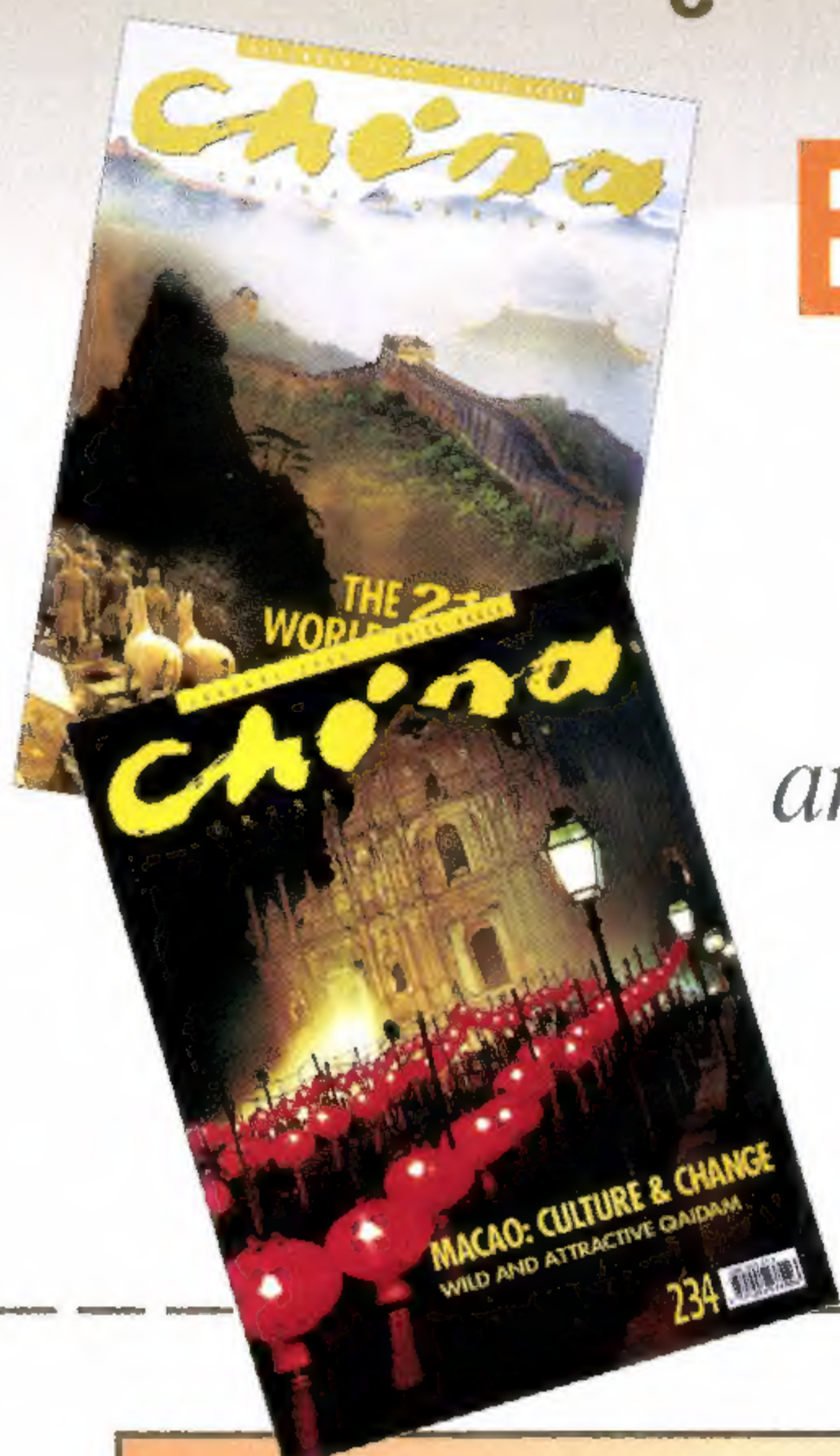
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Route	Days	Dep.	Arr.	Flight
Aksu — Urümqi	1 3 5 7	1630	1830	XO9916
Urümqi — Aksu	1 3 5 7	1400	1600	XO9915
Alma-Ata — Urümqi	1 5	1815	2250	XO712
Urümqi — Alma-Ata	1 5	1805	1645	XO 711
Altay — Urümqi	1 3 5 7	1035	1145	XO9920
Urümqi — Altay	1 3 5 7	0900	1005	XO9919
Beijing — Urümqi	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0920	1300	XO9104
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1525	1905	XO9102
	1 3 6	1650	2045	CZ 329
	2 6	1930	2325	XO9602
Urümqi — Beijing	5 7	1950	2330	XO9312
	4 6	0855	1205	XO9311
	2 6	0945	1255	XO9601
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1055	1405	XO9101
Bishkek — Urümqi	2 4 7	1120	1435	CZ 330
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1500	1810	XO9103
	2 5	1010	1510	XO 718
	2 5	0910	0820	XO 717
Chongqing — Urümqi	3 6	0815	1250	SZ4941
	1 4	1935	2315	XO9522
Urümqi — Chongqing	1 4	0910	1240	XO9521
	3 6	1330	1755	SZ4942
Guangzhou — Urümqi	2 5	0855	1405	CZ3911
	1 3 4 5 7	1530	2025	XO9302
	5 7	1545	2330	XO9312
	2 4 6	1610	2250	XO9308
Urümqi — Guangzhou	4 6	0855	1600	XO9311
	2 4 6	0935	1520	XO9307
	1 3 4 5 7	1005	1415	XO9301
	2 5	1515	1940	CZ3912
Haikou — Urümqi	1 4	1555	2140	XO9388
Urümqi — Haikou	1 4	0935	1455	XO9387
Hotan — Urümqi	2 4 6	1600	1730	XO9912
Urümqi — Hotan	2 4 6	1330	1500	XO9911
Islamabad — Urümqi	3 7	1115	1645	XO 722
Urümqi — Islamabad	3 7	1010	0945	XO 721
Kashi — Urümqi	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	2130	2300	XO9902
Urümqi — Kashi	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1900	2030	XO9901
Korla — Urümqi	1 3 5	1330	1440	XO9932
	2 4 6	2330	2400	XO9936
Urümqi — Korla	1 3 5	0900	1000	XO9931
	2 4 6	2200	2250	XO9935
Lanzhou — Urümqi	2 3 4 6	0950	1210	WH2903
	1 4 5 7	0955	1235	SZ4901
	3 6	1015	1250	SZ4941
	3 6	1120	1440	WH2825
	6	1225	1440	MU7901
	3 7	1950	2240	XO9606
	2 4	2050	2340	XO9508

Route	Days	Dep.	Arr.	Flight
Urümqi — Lanzhou	3 7	0910	1200	XO9605
	2 4	1045	1310	XO9507
	2 3 4 6	1250	1505	WH2904
	1 4 5 7	1325	1545	SZ4902
	3 6	1330	1545	SZ4942
	3 6	1520	1755	WH2826
	6	1525	1740	MU7902
Qiemö — Urümqi	1 3 5	1200	1440	XO9932
Urümqi — Qiemö	1 3 5	0900	1130	XO9931
Shanghai — Urümqi	1 3 4 6 7	1530	2020	XO9502
Urümqi — Shanghai	1 3 4 6 7	0955	1415	XO9501
Shenzhen — Urümqi	5 7	0850	1520	CZ3255
	1 3 4 6	1625	2315	XO9304
Urümqi — Shenzhen	1 3 4 6	0915	1545	XO9303
	5 7	1610	2150	CZ3256
Sverdlovsk — Urümqi	3 6	0130	0830	XO 720
Urümqi — Sverdlovsk	2 5	2000	1850	XO 719
Tacheng — Urümqi	1 5	1650	1800	XO9940
Urümqi — Tacheng	1 5	1500	1610	XO9939
Tashkent — Urümqi	3 6	1900	2400	XO 714
Urümqi — Tashkent	3 6	1900	1800	XO 713
Tianjin — Urümqi	4 7	1455	1915	XO9116
Urümqi — Tianjin	4 7	1025	1405	XO9115
Xi'an — Urümqi	2 3 4 6	0810	1210	WH2903
	2 4 6	1620	2230	XO9218
	2 5	1735	2055	XO9536
	1 4	1900	2230	XO9604
	5 7	1910	2220	XO9510
	1 3	1910	2220	XO9510
	2	1910	2220	XO9516
	2 5	1920	2240	XO9382
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1945	2305	XO9504
	3 6	1950	2320	XO9306
	2 5 7	2000	2330	XO9802
Urümqi — Xi'an	2 5	0900	1205	XO9535
	1 4	0905	1220	XO9603
	2 5 7	0915	1220	XO9801
	2 4 6	0920	1510	XO9217
	2 5	0955	1305	XO9381
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0955	1305	XO9503
	1 3	1005	1315	XO9509
	5 7	1005	1315	XO9509
	2	1015	1250	XO9515
	3 6	1025	1325	XO9305
	2 3 4 6	1250	1645	WH2904
Yining — Urümqi	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	2150	2330	XO9922
Urümqi — Yining	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1930	2110	XO9921
Zhangjiajie — Urümqi	1 5	1440	1915	XO9386
Urümqi — Zhangjiajie	1 5	0915	1340	XO9385

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